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Suffering and Political Thought: A theological consideration  
of the propriety of suffering as a category in political thought.

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PhD.  
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2014

**Declaration.**

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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## Abstract.

This thesis examines the propriety of suffering as a category in political thought. This complex subject matter is approached by examining two responses, and the disagreement arising between these responses, to the perceived failure of politics, modernity and religion in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. The first response to these failures considered is a theological response, representing a politics based on belief, in which we turn to the writings of J.B. Metz as a representative of this position. The second response considered is the philosophical civic humanism of Hannah Arendt as a seminal representative of what we term a politics based on unbelief.

Our question regarding suffering as a category in political thought brings our two representative thinkers into disagreement. Metz presents a vision of political life in which belief – and specifically Christian belief – must liberate itself from privatising forces which confine belief and a response to suffering to the private sphere as a matter of individual concern and inward piety. For Metz the issue of suffering is not merely a matter of individual private concern but of political action. Central to his argument are his understanding of theodicy that forms part of his critique of modernity, the central place he gives Christ's cry of dereliction in theology and his concept of *Leiden an Gott*. Arendt, representative of politics strictly separated from religion on Modernity's grounds, robustly argues that concerns which are matters of the private sphere, that is the household, have invaded the public realm and in doing so have destroyed politics. Suffering is such a concern and it introduces to politics the 'problem of necessity' and impinges upon her concept of human freedom. She therefore represents the antithesis of Metz's position. In order to answer our question regarding suffering our argument focuses by engaging with the issues of freedom and forgiveness. This move is important in establishing the basis on which suffering can appear in the political realm. This thesis argues for and concludes that theology provides the means for a reconciliation of the antinomies between the private and public spheres, between suffering and political thought. We therefore conclude that suffering is an appropriate concern of political life and compassion in the form of Christian charity can take an appropriate form in the political sphere.

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## Abbreviations

Primary sources for J.B. Metz and H. Arendt (Full titles and details are found in the bibliography).

Johann Baptist Metz

Works in German

<i>UH</i>	<i>Unsere Hoffnung</i>
<i>ZTW</i>	<i>Zur Theologie der Welt</i>
<i>ZO</i>	<i>Zeit der Orden?</i>
<i>VS</i>	<i>Vergebung der Sünden</i>
<i>JBR</i>	<i>Jenseits bürgerlicher Religion</i>
<i>EG</i>	<i>Ermutigung zum Gebet</i>
<i>GGG</i>	<i>Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft</i>
<i>TT</i>	<i>Theologie als Theodizee?</i>
<i>KA</i>	<i>Kirche nach Auschwitz</i>
<i>UNT</i>	<i>Unterwegs zu einer nachidealistischen</i>
<i>Theologie</i>	

Works in English Translations.

<i>TW</i>	<i>Theology of the World</i>
<i>FC</i>	<i>Followers of Christ</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>The Emergent Church</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>A Passion for God</i>
<i>FHS</i>	<i>Faith in History and Society</i>

Johann Baptist Metz & Jürgen Moltmann

<i>FF</i>	<i>Faith and the Future</i>
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Johann Baptist Metz, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Jürgen Moltmann, and Eveline Goodman-Thau

<i>ET</i>	<i>The End of Time?</i>
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Hannah Arendt

<i>OT</i>	<i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i>
<i>BPF</i>	<i>Between Past and Future</i>
<i>HC</i>	<i>The Human Condition</i>
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>
<i>OR</i>	<i>On Revolution</i>
<i>TLM</i>	<i>The Life of the Mind</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>The Crises of the Republic</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>The Promise of Politics</i>

Primary Sources for\_Papal Encyclicals and Apostolic Letters. (Full titles and details are found in the bibliography)

*CV*  
*DCE*  
*FR*  
*SRS*  
*SD*  
*LE*  
*NA*  
*SP*

*Caritas in Veritate,*  
*Deus Caritas Est,*  
*Fides et Ratio,*  
*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,*  
*Salvifici Doloris,*  
*Laborem Exercens,*  
*Nostra Aetate;*  
*Summi Pontificatus,*



## **Chapter 1.**

### **Setting the Scene.**

This thesis seeks to examine the propriety of suffering as a category in contemporary political thought. Is suffering a matter we can only attend to as private individuals? Or is the issue of suffering essentially political? Must it negate politics, if it were admitted as a political concern, by taking precedence over all other concerns? Or is it at the heart of all the concerns of political existence? Disagreement between these stances gives rise to our question. This complex subject matter shall be approached by examining two responses to the perceived failure of politics, modernity and religion in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. This failure played its part in creating the conditions in which two world wars took place and in which the National Socialist regime in Germany sought to annihilate the Jews of Europe. These failures, which together may be understood as the failure of the Enlightenment, continue to resonate into our own time. Indeed in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the new millennium we have seen our own seismic cultural, religious, political and economic changes. The Cold War ended in 1989 with the falling of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet communist block. However, this did not mean, as Fukuyama proposed, the 'end of history'. For him the struggle between competing ideologies that has fuelled historical

development had come to an end with the “triumph of the West, of the Western idea” over its alternatives<sup>1</sup>. Baudrillard was partly right when he noted, “History will not come to an end” because “the church, communism, ethnic groups, conflicts, ideologies – are indefinitely recyclable”<sup>2</sup>. The public space will always be a contested space: there will always be meta ideas and competing visions of life. This thesis examines one conflict within this contested space, that is the conflict between belief and non-belief as the basis for forming our vision of what political life can and should be, as expressed in a response to suffering as a political category. Yet, Baudrillard is only partly right, for the ideas, movements, institutions and events that form history are not *indefinitely* recyclable. History will come to an end in another sense; at least this is what Christian theology and the witness of scripture attest to.

This recycling of religion, political ideas, conflicts and ideologies reminds us of Qoheleth’s world-weary wisdom at the beginning of Ecclesiastes:

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. (Eccl. 1: 9)

In our present age the struggle to formulate a vision of political life that fosters human flourishing and care for our planet is therefore not detached from what has gone before us. Modernity and the influence of the Enlightenment, with its successes and failures, still decisively shape the world in which we live. Yet, we must not let the wisdom of Qoheleth be confused with Nietzsche’s “eternal

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<sup>1</sup> Fukuyama, Francis, *The End of History?*, in *The National Interest (Summer)*, 1989, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Baudrillard, Jean, *The Illusion of the End (Trans. Chris Turner)*, in *Selected Writings: Second Edition (Ed. Mark Poster)*, Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 264.

return of the same”<sup>3</sup>. But what of this cycle of passing away and becoming, in which the same ideas, ideologies and conflicts seem to return to us? Two thoughts are important with regards to this. Firstly, the end of history is not arbitrary; history has a goal that is the redemption of God’s creation in which his glory shall cover the whole earth and his dwelling place shall be with human kind. The eschatological vision of our goal is the transformation of this broken planet and troubled world into the New Creation in which heaven and earth have come together to enjoy and be filled with God’s presence. Our journey to this end, this goal, is not linear nor is it dialectical. To propose such would be to advocate some sort of Hegelian idealism rather than Christian eschatology. No, history’s orientation towards its goal in God is complex, ambiguous and hidden. For Christian theology this raises the importance of discerning our end in God to which we should be orientated. Having discerned our end in God, our task as theologians is to articulate what this means for life together as we seek to live faithfully in the midst of our present age.

Secondly, the goal of history has already broken into our present space and time. In the incarnation of Christ something decisively new took place in history: God became man. This newness was not totally discontinuous with the old. Like God’s prophets before him, Christ’s confronting the powers and speaking truth led to a violent death. Yet, God’s raising Christ from the dead witnessed to something new at work in history, the power of resurrection life. Christ’s incarnation inaugurated the kingdom of God at work among us; his

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<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, (Ed. Bernard Williams, Trans. Josefine Nauckhoff), Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2001, §341, p. 194.

resurrection was the first fruit of our hope (1 Cor. 15), so that we await the appearance of the kingdom and our resurrection to fullness of life in Christ in a world where both the old and the new are present and at work.

The need to question and critique the big ideas and competing visions of life together for the world in which we live is a continuous one. Whatever the prophets of postmodernity may say about shifts in perspective away from Enlightenment ideology, big ideas continue to shape our perceptions and ideological disagreements continue apace. Likewise religion, even in secular Europe, continues to be a powerful social, cultural and political force. Thus, the need for political, modernity and religious critique continues as we search for a vision of life in which communities and persons and the world we inhabit may flourish. In seeking resources for such a critique and vision, we can learn much from an engagement with those who responded to the failures of politics, modernity and religion in Europe in our recent past. In turning to representatives of this response we find ourselves in the middle of a disagreement over belief and un-belief as the basis of both critique and political vision. This is a disagreement that has not abated. As Graham Ward recently observed: “The world is changing, and religion is one of the drivers of this change”<sup>4</sup>. Given this is the case, debate over the place of religion or, as we have phrased it, belief, in political discourse and the public square is apropos and important.

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<sup>4</sup> Ward, Graham, *The Politics of Discipleship*, London : SCM Press, 2009, p. 23.

The first response to the failure of politics, modernity and religion we shall consider is that of Christian belief as essential to political thought. As representative of this position we shall engage with Johann Baptist Metz, whom we shall more fully introduce below. The second response, that of unbelief, shall as its representative consider the philosophical civic humanism of Hannah Arendt. We shall also more fully introduce Arendt below. Our concern over the question of a vision of political thought and life based on belief versus one based on unbelief is not a digression from our question regarding suffering. It is our contention that at the heart of the disagreement over the propriety of suffering in political thought is this issue of belief and unbelief. Given these differing visions of political thought have as their aim human flourishing, collimate to the bifurcation of political thought are two competing visions of humanism. Unlike his French counterpart Jacques Maritain who proposed a Christian humanism, Metz does not describe his political theology in these terms<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, we assert that while Metz's political theology is a reaction to existential personalist theologies, of which Maritain would be an influential example, it is still a form of Catholic integralism. However, to enter into such debate at this point is to get ahead of one's self and our task of setting the scene. We, therefore, have two forms of humanism at the heart of the disagreement over suffering and political vision: Christian humanism and philosophical civic humanism.

In summary, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that disagreements over the place of suffering in political life are, in the end, the struggle between two

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<sup>5</sup> See, Maritain, Jacques, *True Humanism* (Trans. M.R. Adamson), London : The Centenary Press, 1938.

competing visions of politics. We will argue that at the heart of this disagreement is the corresponding disagreement arising from the antinomy of a vision of politics based on belief and a vision of politics based on unbelief. In interacting with Metz and Arendt and outlining their political thought we shall establish these two positions and why this disagreement arises. Furthermore, in order to answer our question regarding suffering we shall focus the argument between these competing visions of political life by engaging with the issues of freedom and forgiveness. This move is important in establishing the basis on which suffering can appear in the political realm.

The disagreement between these two visions of political life also raises the issue of how the relatedness, or separation, of the public and private spheres should be understood and embraced. Can a theological approach to this issue articulate a position where the distinctiveness proper to each sphere is maintained, without sealing one sphere off from the other? This argument comes to a focus towards the end of the thesis.

This thesis argues that theology provides the means for a reconciliation of the antinomies between the private and public spheres, between suffering and political thought and concludes that compassion in the form of Christian charity can take an appropriate form in the political sphere.

## Background.

In order to understand Metz and Arendt as representatives of the European reaction to the perceived failure of politics, modernity and religion we shall briefly outline the background from which these responses arise.

It is perhaps easy to forget that in European terms Germany, as a nation, was relatively late in being established. This, and considerable reflection by Germans on the character of the German people especially after the Second World War, means we have access to informative observations about typical features of the German outlook. Winkler, a German historian, notes his homeland was politically, “far behind England and France, developing a nation state only after 1866 and democracy still later”<sup>6</sup>. This relative infancy of the German nation, he reflects, means that questions of national identity and between territory and constitution have been more acute than in other European nations. This issue has often been referred to as the *Deutsche Frage*, which Winkler notes is the question of the relationship between unity and freedom. The issue of insecurity about identity is important and has been taken up by Metz’s friend, compatriot and collaborator, Moltmann. He states: “People who exhibit insecure, unstable identities often try to define themselves in demarcations and aggressions against others”<sup>7</sup>. This insecurity and the “fatal propensity for binary

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<sup>6</sup> Winkler, Heinrich August, *Germany: The Long Road West, Volume 1*, (Trans. Alexander J Sager), Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 1. The year 1866 marks the start of the Austro-Prussian war. It was this conflict that paved the way for German unification in 1871 under the Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck.

<sup>7</sup> Moltmann, Jürgen, *Theology in Germany Today*, in Habermas, Jürgen (ed.), *Observations on ‘The Spiritual Situation of the Age’* (Trans. Andrew Buchwalter), Massachusetts : MIT Press, 1985, p. 185.

thinking,” which, while not exclusive to German thinking, is certainly one of its hallmarks, can be seen in the political theology of Carl Schmitt and his friend-foe distinction<sup>8</sup>. Yet, beneath this tendency for binary thinking, for friend-foe distinctions, Moltmann suggests is “the old German longing for unity – the unity of being in general, the unity of thought, the unity of human society, the unity of the church”<sup>9</sup>. Politically this theme of unity has often become the question of territory and modern Germany’s struggle with its complex geographical and political relationship with the Holy Roman Empire and the Hapsburgs. This historical unity finds echoes today in the evocative concept of Mitteleuropa whose meaning is only partly geographical, but also pertains to common forms of politics, society, economy, religion and culture. As Martinez notes: “Metz himself refers consistently to Mitteleuropa as his cultural context throughout his work”<sup>10</sup>. This quest for unity is in many respects linked to the well developed and highly efficient bureaucratic system and “élite caste of professional office-holders” who were the organisational and administrative “cement which was to keep the Habsburg monarchy going long after the demise of the Empire in Germany”<sup>11</sup>. This in turn is connected to the German reputation for a love of order. This has, however, according to Moltmann created conditions under which, when faced with the “choice between revolution and dictatorship”, a corollary of the

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<sup>8</sup> Moltmann, *Ibid.* Schmitt states: “the specific political distinction ...is that between friend and enemy”. Schmitt, Carl, *The Concept of the Political* (Trans. George Schwab), Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1996, 2007, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Moltmann, *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>10</sup> Martinez, Gaspar, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, London : Continuum, 2001, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, Norman, *Europe: A History*, London : Pinlico, 1997, p. 646.



German question of unity, the “Germans have always opted for the dictator” in order to preserve this valued unity<sup>12</sup>.

These themes of identity, unity and freedom, revolution and dictatorship, and bureaucracy are all features of our two representative thinkers. Reflection on the *Deutsche Frage* and the nature of politics itself was part of the response of post-WWII to its disastrous experience of National Socialism. This political and national soul searching did not merely focus on the Nazi period, but understood the rise of aggressive and assertive National Socialism as a reaction to the weak Weimar Republic. It is within this climate of questioning and consideration of what politics is that Metz and Arendt formulate their own proposals.

Three other background issues are also important to note: the French Revolution, Germany’s economic situation and European enlightenment. The French Revolution marked the blossoming of a variety of political, philosophical and cultural ideas and forces, both antecedent and contemporaneous. Metz and Arendt in differing ways engage with key themes that arise from, or are rooted in, the French Revolution and which have formed a common political tradition for Western politics and democracies until the present day. Themes such as freedom and authority, and the recasting of politics as a product of rational consideration requiring a rejection of metaphysical or religious justification. The milieu of the French Revolution thus informs the common political tradition into which and about which Metz and Arendt write. Thus, they address a wider set of problems

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<sup>12</sup> Moltmann, *Ibid.*

than those arising from purely German factors and speak to us not as Germans merely discussing parochial concerns and issues, but as fellow Westerners who seek to address the problems of the West from within a common tradition.

Economically, Germany post World War II has been a major world economic power and consistently the powerhouse of the European economy. This is not to discount problems and periods of high unemployment. After 1990 there was much economic, social and political pain as the former GDR (German Democratic Republic) was assimilated with the former West Germany to give, once again, a unified German nation. Metz's and Arendt's concern regarding the economic situation differ, yet in addressing the economic question they address an issue that is common to the politics of the West and not just of Germany. Arendt's concern is that politics will be lost to the domination of economic questions and concerns. For Metz, there are two main economic issues. One may be phrased: "at whose expense have we become rich?" This exhibits his dialectical thinking and the binary opposition that is such a feature of this thinking. The world, through Metz's eyes, is seen in terms of victors and vanquished, or the powerful and oppressed. Metz's other economic concern is that fiscal and economic concerns are, and coalesce with, anonymous forces that impinge upon freedom and dehumanise human subjects to that point that there are no persons but merely consumers and units of production.

As we noted, key to our representative thinkers is the critique of modernity. This primarily takes the form of engagement with the

Enlightenment. This is not to say modernity is just another name for the Enlightenment. Modernity is the term we apply to the intellectual period in which we have seen the rise of the natural sciences, based upon the empirical method, and the supremacy of human reason. It, therefore, marks the period in intellectual and cultural history after Scholasticism in which the scholastic ideal of a unified knowledge is replaced with the development of a plurality of sciences. This rise of science and reason coincided with the Renaissance and its blossoming was to be found in the Scottish, French and German Enlightenments. While there are commonalities between these enlightenments, the “German *Aufklärung*” differed from the others in that religion and theology “continued to be central concerns” in a way that was not the case in France especially<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, given both our thinkers are German it is the Enlightenment within this country that forms the backdrop to their own intellectual endeavors. The German Enlightenment traces its beginnings to Christian Tomasius (1655 – 1728) and Christian Wolff (1679 – 1754), but it is with Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) that it is most commonly associated<sup>14</sup>. This is not to discard the importance of Lessing who died the year Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared. Nor is it to discount the importance of Herder, Fichte, Schelling and others who came after Kant and thought of themselves as reacting against the Enlightenment as it had been received from him. If we are to think in terms of those with whom the twentieth century critiques of modernity wrestle, then after Kant the idealism of Hegel and the reactions to his thought by Marx and

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<sup>13</sup> Martinez, *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> Copleston, Fredrick, *A History of Philosophy: Volume 6. The Enlightenment, Voltaire to Kant*, London : Continuum, 1960, 2003, pp. 101 – 106.

Nietzsche come to the fore. It is also worth noting the background role of Heidegger and his questions regarding being, hermeneutics and time, especially given Arendt was his student.

So far our brief background summary has focused on the political, cultural, economic and intellectual landscape that shaped Metz and Arendt and to which they also react. This leaves us to consider the failures of religion, an issue over which Metz and Arendt respond differently. Arendt's relative silence on the failure of religion is for two reasons. Firstly, her separation of religion from politics mean her writings focus on philosophical and political issues rather than religious or theological. Her separation of religion from politics means that she did not expect religious people to act any differently in response to the rise of National Socialism than the rest of society. She comments, "Catholics behaved in no way differently from the rest of the population"<sup>15</sup>. Secondly, there is a "critical distance" to Jewish thought in general and Jewish religious thought in particular in her work<sup>16</sup>. Jerome Kohn notes that while "some Jews may 'actualize' their Jewishness in their religious creeds and beliefs, Arendt is not among them"<sup>17</sup>. Rather, her Jewishness was an "indisputable fact"

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<sup>15</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *The Deputy: Guilty by Silence?* in *Amour Mundi: Boston College Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 26, 1987, p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Sznajder, Natan, *Jewish Memory and the Cosmopolitan Order*, Cambridge : Polity Press, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Kohn, Jerome, *Introduction*, in Arendt, Hannah, *The Jewish Writings* (Kohn, Jerome and Feldman, Ron H., Eds.), New York : Schocken Books, 2008, p. xiii.

in the same way as being a woman was a fact, thus her experience of being a Jew rather than a religious belief system has a bearing on her writings<sup>18</sup>.

Metz on the other hand writes from a specifically religious perspective and belongs to a generation of German theologians that reflect upon their direct experience of war and National Socialism. While this reflection is not uniform two key themes emerge. One is the lack of organized theological or ecclesiological resistance to the rise of National Socialism within Germany and other totalitarian forms of government in Europe. The second failure of religion was to reevaluate its difference and alterity from the dominant social norms and political power of the world. In other words, church and theology have struggled to develop, articulate and maintain a position as a positive voice within and to the world and at the same time fulfil its prophetic ministry of critiquing itself and the systems and institutions that form and shape this world.

Werner Jeanrond's analysis on the war period and its antecedents is illustrative of the kind of narrative Metz forms of the period. Among many German Christians after the war there was a great uneasiness with how the Churches and Christians as citizens had failed to resist the rise of National Socialism. This uneasiness is not to discount the brave declarations and actions of people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Maximilian Kolbe or Martin Niemöller, to name but a few individuals. Nor is it to dismiss the bravery of the Confessing

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<sup>18</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *The Eichmann Controversy: A Letter to Gershom Scholem*, in *Op. cit.* p. 466.

Church and the significance of the Barmen Declaration of 1934. Jeanrond's assessment is that Barmen was too little too late and furthermore, Barth's theological method made "the development of a political theology impossible"<sup>19</sup>.

If Barth's theology "remained detached from the world it wanted to save," then Jeanrond argues that during the Weimar Republic, Roman Catholic theology was circumscribed by conservatively adhering to a Neo-Scholastic method and principles that meant it struggled to have an impact on wider German culture<sup>20</sup>. This adherence to neo-Scholasticism coupled with two other factors. Firstly, during the Weimar period the Roman Catholic church was overly concerned with securing legal agreements (*Konkordat*) securing its institutional position within Germany. Nuncio Eugenio Pacelli, who would become Pope Pius XII (1939 – 1958), was a key participant in these negotiations. Secondly, Roman Catholic authorities were primarily concerned with the ideological threat posed by Marxism and were inattentive to ideological and political threats closer to home. Jeanrond notes:

This political endeavor to reach an agreement between church and state did not help to promote a public theological debate between Christian theology, on the one hand, and the new ideological movements on either side of the political spectrum in Germany, on the other<sup>21</sup>.

There was, hence, the situation where for differing reasons neither the Protestant church nor the Catholic Church and their respective theologies were

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<sup>19</sup> Jeanrond, Werner G., *From Resistance to Liberation Theology: German Theologians and the Non/Resistance to the National Socialist Regime*, in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 64, Supplement – Resistance Against the Third Reich, December, 1992, pp. 187 – 203, p. 188.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

in a position to adequately resist the political and social ideology of National Socialism. The possibility for a “new and critical political theory before, during, and after the Third Reich” did not therefore issue from an ecclesial or theological source, but from what has come to be known as the Frankfurt School<sup>22</sup>. This is pertinent to our study for this is not only the context into which Metz and Arendt wrote, but both had significant ties to the Frankfurt School and were influenced by different members of this collective. In particular Metz’s methodology owes much to the critical, political and social theory developed by Frankfurt School thinkers.

#### Headline Disagreement.

Two quotes from our representative thinkers bring into focus the dispute over the place of suffering in political life and thought. We shall place these thoughts in the context of their wider thought in the respective chapters dealing with each thinker. Here we merely seek to set out the central basis for their disagreement.

Writing on the French Revolution Arendt states:

Measured against the immense sufferings of the immense majority of the people, the impartiality of justice and law, the application of the same rules to those who sleep in palaces and those who sleep under the bridges of Paris, was like a mockery. Since the revolution had opened the gates of the political realm to the poor, this realm had indeed become ‘social’. It was overwhelmed by the cares and worries which actually belonged in the sphere of the household and which, even if they were permitted to enter the public realm, could not be solved by political means, since they were matters of administration, to be put into the hands of experts, rather than issues which could be settled by the twofold process of decision and persuasion<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>23</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution*, London : Penguin Books, 1963, 2006, p. 81.

We shall set out and explore later in detail why Arendt is of this opinion. However, this quote succinctly highlights her anxiety over the admission of the concerns of those who suffer into the political realm. These concerns overwhelm political life and do not belong to the political realm but to the sphere of the household. This draws attention to her understanding of the forms of life as belonging to two distinct realms: the political realm that has to do with public matters and the private sphere, which is comprised of the household and the family. The public realm is political and the private realm is pre-political and each has activities proper to them. Hence we note in the quote above that administration, which would include the care of the poor, is an activity proper to the pre-political realm of the household and family. There are also activities proper to the political sphere, namely the making of decisions and the art of persuasion. If society is to function well and people flourish within these two realms then the demarcation of these two realms must be maintained; this means activities should take place within their proper sphere. Arendt's argument is that the introduction of activities and cares proper to the private realm has entered the public sphere and that this has destroyed political life. Why this is so we shall consider in chapters 5 and 6.

The destruction of the political realm is simultaneously the destruction of the private sphere. Thus, rather than there being two distinct spheres of life – the private and the political – Arendt argues that a hybrid sphere has been formed which she names as 'the social'. This hybrid sphere is illegitimate, it is a corrupt version of the two proper spheres and as such it is a sphere in which persons and



human activity cannot properly flourish. A key element in the formation of this social realm, and thus the destruction of the political and private realms, is the introduction into the political realm of what she terms 'necessity'. She argues that political concern for those who suffer introduces necessity and this removes the conditions required for politics to exist. For Arendt, concern for those who suffer must always remain a matter for the household, it should always be a private matter, and must not be allowed to become a political concern.

Metz is also deeply concerned about the demarcation of the spheres of life. For him, a central issue is that our Christian belief and action, which should be part of the public realm, has been forced into the private sphere and forbidden to appear in public. He is not arguing for the dissolution of the distinction between public and private but that it must be configured in a new way<sup>24</sup>. This banishment of belief and action based on this belief to the private sphere occurred under two major forces. One was the influence of the Protestant Reformation where "a Christianity that would have us believe that grace is mediated through the Word alone" and an emphasis on "pure doctrine" restricted belief and action to "its own private sphere"<sup>25</sup>. The second was the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the domination of a culture of exchange. To grasp the impact of what he says in this regard we shall quote him at length.

The bourgeois know that they are no longer sustained by comprehensive traditions, let alone religious ones ...The bourgeois know that they are sustained by a new principle that supports and

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<sup>24</sup> See Metz, J.B., *Jenseits bürgerlicher Religion*, Mainz : Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1980, p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74. Where Metz is quoted from a German edition of his work the translation is by myself unless otherwise stated.

regulates all social relations: the principle of exchange. Production, trade, and consumption are all determined in terms of that principle. All other values that had heretofore shaped social affairs, and that did not contribute directly to the functioning of the bourgeois exchange-society, retreated more and more into the sphere of the private<sup>26</sup>.

This separation of public and political life from comprehensive traditions, especially from the belief and action of the Christian faith, is what he terms “religion and politics on modernity’s ground”<sup>27</sup>. It is on these terms that he briefly interacts with Arendt, commenting that “she has come to be seen as the theorist of politics strictly separated from religion on modernity’s ground”<sup>28</sup>.

This separation of the private and public, and the domination of bourgeois culture with, in particular, its principle of exchange leads Metz to argue that in contemporary society there is an “anonymously imposed prohibition of suffering” and reflection upon it<sup>29</sup>. For him this is critical for “there is no suffering in the world that does not concern us”<sup>30</sup>. The bourgeois response to such suffering is to give money, rather than learning to “live differently”. He comments:

All the major social, economic, and ecological questions can be resolved today only through fundamental changes among ourselves and in ourselves ...The issue today – and this applies in a special way to politics also – is that we should learn to ‘live differently,’ so that others should be able to live at all<sup>31</sup>.

Moreover, rather than learning to live differently, under this principle of exchange, money “often acquired mercilessly” sustains the privileges of the

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<sup>26</sup> Metz, *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Mainz : Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1977, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> This is the sub-title of a 1995 essay, see Metz, J.B. *Monotheism and Democracy: Religion and Politics on Modernity’s Ground*, in Metz, *A Passion for God* (Trans. J. Matthew Ashley), New York : Paulist Press, 1998, pp. 136 – 149.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>29</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 142.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, PG, p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Metz, *The Emergent Church* (Trans. Peter Mann), London : SCM Press, 1981, p. 61.

bourgeoisie and through private philanthropic giving soothes their conscience<sup>32</sup>.

We shall return to this theme in the following chapter.

Metz is not simply arguing for a return to tradition, but that the tradition of Christian belief and action will pass through, rather than around, the Enlightenment. Similarly, Christianity cannot ignore the events of history when it speaks about God. Thus, the new political theology he proposes is rooted in “speaking about God within the *conversion ad passionem*” and our following of Jesus, our talk of God, will take into account and be shaped by and even “wounded by the misfortune of others”<sup>33</sup>.

Having briefly set the scene and outlined the basis for the disagreement between Metz and Arendt we shall now outline the route this thesis shall take.

Chapter 2 shall outline the political theology of J.B. Metz as a representative of European theological modernity critique. As such it elucidates the position of a vision of political life based on belief. It shall in particular focus on his categories of solidarity, narrative and memory as essential to the “conversion” of what he terms bourgeois man, society, and religion. We shall critique his adoption of the language of class and rename his bourgeois person as Enlightenment Man. Within this discussion his thoughts on the privatisation of religion and of Christianity in particular shall be to the fore as given the

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<sup>32</sup> Metz, *JBR*, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, *PG*, p. 2.

foregoing this is important to the disagreement with the stream of political thought represented by Arendt.

Chapters 3 and 4 will deal with two central issues that shape Metz's understanding of suffering and inform his political thought. These are the issues of theodicy and of God's relationship to suffering. The horrors of the Great War and World War II invoked anew for Metz's generation the issue of theodicy. In chapter 3 we outline Metz's approach to this issue and how it shapes his vision of political life. In chapter 4 we establish Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross as foundational to Metz's understanding of suffering, God's relationship to suffering and our response. We argue for corrections to this understanding and critique his category of victim by developing a theology of the cross. Our argument will be that if we are to establish a vision of political life based on Christian belief then how we understand these issues decisively shapes the political thought we articulate.

Chapter 5 sees our attention turn to the political thought of Hannah Arendt. Here we outline her political philosophy and elucidate a vision of political life unconnected to religious belief. In order to understand why she considers suffering to be damaging to political life we think carefully about her separation of the political sphere and the private sphere, and her argument that suffering belongs in the private sphere of the household. In order to understand why this is so her key concept of action is discussed at some length.

This groundwork prepares us to consider, in Chapter 6, Arendt's comments on suffering. She argues that suffering must remain the concern of the household for if it enters the political sphere it introduces necessity, which destroys the ground for the plurality of viewpoints required for there to be politics. The introduction of necessity and its associated compulsion represents a loss of freedom, thus Arendt on freedom is considered and contrasted with an understanding of freedom developed from a Christian perspective.

In chapter 7 Arendt and Metz are brought together in a mediated discussion on the topics of forgiveness and repentance. Given Metz argues that the bourgeois subject requires a conversion, if he or she is to be in solidarity with those who suffer, an argument is made that forgiveness and repentance are important to this conversion. Forgiveness and repentance are therefore important to a politics that addresses suffering and its consequences and causes. Surprisingly, given her separation of religion from politics, Arendt considers forgiveness to be important to political life. Her concept of political forgiveness is considered in light of a Jewish understanding and her use of gospel passages critiqued. Metz's comments on forgiveness are brief, however he highlights the need for repentance and the importance of the conjoining forgiveness and repentance is brought to the fore. Arendt's understanding of forgiveness is supplemented with a theological understanding and in doing this we develop what we term the judicial and moral strands of forgiveness in order to articulate the form Christian forgiveness can take in the political sphere.

In our concluding two chapters we look to make positive proposals based on our interaction with Metz and Arendt. Chapter 8 seeks to outline how theology helps us negotiate the relation between the private and public spheres. As such we propose a theological understanding in which the antinomies between these spheres are reconciled and compassion in the form of Christian charity can appear in the political sphere. Within this section we critique the rise of the category of solidarity and develop our understanding of charity by an Augustinian reading of “the Good Samaritan”. The argument is made that solidarity is not an alternative to charity, but if it is to truly be a response of compassion to those who suffer it must arise from charity. Furthermore, we ask how we can become a people capable of such charity and of practically renegotiating and reconciling antinomies between our private and public selves. We end with chapter 9 in which we summarise the arguments and findings of the thesis.

The methodology of this thesis is theological, however this does not mean *a priori* a presumption in favour of Metz. We aim to treat both our representatives with respect. Moreover, while this is primarily an engagement with a Catholic theologian and a ‘secular’ philosopher, both of whom are German, I am neither a Roman Catholic, a philosopher nor German. This means that a certain critical perspective is woven into the fabric of our approach, given Metz and Arendt are read with Scottish and Protestant eyes. This is not to say that a particular denominational stance ideologically, or doctrinally, drives this thesis. The writer is Baptist; however, sources are drawn from many other

traditions, notably Lutheran, Anglican, and Augustinian. It is not until our reflection upon the Eucharist that an explicit Baptist approach is assumed. Yet even here openness to the catholicity of Christian belief and the rich insights we learn from each other marks the approach of this reflection.

Given our approach is theological much of our reflection and argument is based both on an implied and explicit interaction with the Christian Bible (Scripture)<sup>34</sup>. It is therefore taken for granted that scripture is authoritative and has theo-political dimensions that inform and illuminate our understanding of the political realm and the relationship of the church and the individual believer to this sphere.

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<sup>34</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the text of the New Revised Standard Version will be used throughout.

## Chapter 2.

### The Theological Response: J.B. Metz's Political Theology.

Introducing J.B. Metz.

The political theology of Roman Catholic German theologian Johann Baptist Metz is representative of a theological response to the failure of politics, modernity and religion in Europe and has at its centre the issue of suffering as a political category. It is, however, difficult to present his thought in an organised manner as he has deliberately sought to present his work in an unsystematic fashion. This rejection of system does not result in a Nietzschean adoption of aphorisms and epigrams. Rather, it stems from a methodological rejection of “system-based” theological concerns, and the embracing and “decisive use of subject concepts in the realm of theology”<sup>35</sup>. We shall consider Metz's use of the word subject [*Subjekt*] below.

His eschewal of system is not whimsical but is based on his theology being “a practical fundamental theology, or a fundamental theology with a practical intent”, a methodological choice that reveals the primary concerns of his theology <sup>36</sup>. By adopting this approach Metz presents his theology as „*als Korrektiv gegenüber bestehenden theologischen Ansätzen*“ [as a corrective to existing

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<sup>35</sup> Metz, J.B. and Moltmann, Jurgen, *Faith and the Future*, New York : Orbis Books, 1995, p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (Trans J. Matthew Ashley), New York : The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007, p. xi.



theological approaches] that entails an abandonment of closed philosophical and theological systems<sup>37</sup>. As such it marks the influence of Horkheimer and Adorno upon his thought and his interest in and adoption of the critical theory they developed along with other Frankfurt School thinkers. Systemised thinking, in Metz's opinion, was able to carry on as though Auschwitz never happened and did not sufficiently take cognisance of the social, cultural and economic location of the thinker, nor the social context and cultural conditions under which such thinking takes place. This political theology as a practical critical critique owes a genealogical debt to Marx's immanent critique developed in his critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Marx sought to redefine philosophy as praxis, bringing about a unity in theory and praxis in which "philosophy and praxis is the activity of informed criticism"<sup>38</sup>. Metz's use of aspects of critical theory, which includes elements of Marx's immanent critique, is not itself uncritical. He is clear, in a response to Roger Garaudy, as to how Christianity and Marxism differ and warns against an "unimaginative adaptation" of Marxist ideas and ideology by Christian theology<sup>39</sup>. What remains is, however, the development of a critical approach in which there is a unity of theory and praxis that seeks to take the form of transformative criticism (Feuerbach).

His rejection of system and his proposal for a practical fundamental theology expresses a concern to confront and challenge social, cultural and economic forces that subject people to concrete experiences of non-identity.

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<sup>37</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> O'Malley, Joseph, *Editor's Introduction*, in Marx, Karl, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. xxi.

<sup>39</sup> Metz, in Garaudy, Roger, *From Anathema to Dialogue (Trans. Of German Texts Edward Quinn)*, Gateshead : Northumberland Press Ltd., 1967, p. 109.

There are a number of experiences that he views as destructive to human subjecthood. For Metz this loss of the subject also represents a loss of, perhaps self-evidently, identity, but also epistemological coherence, and universal ethics. Chief among these is “the replacement of history by a mere collage of facts”<sup>40</sup>. This loss of history, of collective memory or, as Metz will refer to, anamnestic reason, has facilitated the remythologization of Europe and the ‘West’, a polymythic culture of “the neo-mythic cult of European postmodernity” which has led to a second age of *Unmündigkeit*<sup>41</sup>. As Gaspar Martinez helpfully points out:

Christianity has, therefore, in Metz’s theology, a clear historical mission in our days: to rescue the subject from its modern alienation, rescuing at the same time modernity from its own self-destructive power<sup>42</sup>.

It is this recovery of and attention to the subject and concrete history, particularly its negative side, that drives his rejection of systemising theology. He believes that the systemisation of theology leads to a “theological idealism” that not only turns its back on historical particularities but the “particular agent” within history, and is thus subjectless. He therefore calls his theology post-idealist, a theology “locked into a concept of the active agent” and “directed from history in the singular to histories of suffering in the plural”<sup>43</sup>. His comment regarding the active agent is a rejection of what he calls “a concept of system” by which we understand him to be referring to universalising meta-theories of Idealism in which the actions of individual agents, and their sufferings, are lost

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<sup>40</sup> Martinez, *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> Metz, *FF*, p. 75. We shall return to the issue of *Unmündigkeit* in chapter 4.

<sup>42</sup> Martinez, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> Metz, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

to the dominance of the overall abstract system that is at work<sup>44</sup>. Likewise, Idealism's teleological view of history and its "metaphysical interpretation of history," obscures individual events in history with its focus of realising the actuality of the Absolute within time<sup>45</sup>. Metz does not want the "catastrophe of Auschwitz," or other events of suffering, to be lost in an understanding of history that in its grand sweep understands history as primarily the positive march of progress. He, therefore, as we noted, talks of histories of suffering in the plural.

As we have noted, Metz calls his theology "a practical fundamental theology, or a fundamental theology with a practical intent"<sup>46</sup>. The adjectives qualifying 'theology' in this novel delimitation require some further explanation. Metz comments that his theology is practical "because in formulating its concepts it can never do without the wisdom that is gained in doing"<sup>47</sup>. It is essential to understand that for Metz the relationship between theory and praxis, knowing and doing, is not linear or sequential. That is, praxis is not the application of a prior theory worked out elsewhere, but there exists a "theory-praxis dialectic"<sup>48</sup>. This understanding of theory-praxis is clearly expressed in his Christology in stating what it means to follow Christ. He writes:

Christ himself is not only a supreme being worthy of worship, but also, and always, a way. Every attempt to know him, to understand him, is therefore always a journey, a following ...Following Christ is therefore

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Copleston, Frederick, *A History of Philosophy, Volume 7: 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century German Philosophy*, London : Continuum, 1963, 2003, p. 225.

<sup>46</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. xi.

<sup>47</sup> Metz in Schuster, Ekkehard, and Boschert-Kimming, Reinhold, *Hope Against Hope (Trans. J. Matthew Ashley)*, New York : Paulist Press, 1999, p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 61.

not just a subsequent application of the Church's Christology to our life: the practice of following Christ is itself a central part of Christology<sup>49</sup>.

Echoing St. Paul and comments by Kierkegaard he informs us that this following necessitates that we "put on Christ" (Rom. 13:14)<sup>50</sup>. This is not restricted to individual moral behaviour given that "following Christ has a fundamental social and political element ...[thus] the theology of following Christ is political Christology"<sup>51</sup>.

The term fundamental theology has come to be associated as a branch of Catholic theology, and this is in no small part due to major contributions by Catholic scholars<sup>52</sup>. However, as Gerald O'Collins S.J. points out, the term was used in Catholic theology to denote a distinct discipline within theology only from the nineteenth-century<sup>53</sup>. As such it had as its "immediate background ...the apologetics developed by Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant authors in response to the Enlightenment"<sup>54</sup>. This connection with the apologetic and theological response to the Enlightenment is important as Metz's fundamental theology very much falls into the category of Enlightenment critique. His critique proposed a "new way of working through the Enlightenment itself, a radical enlightenment of the Enlightenment, a political-theological

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<sup>49</sup> Metz, *Followers of Christ* (Trans. Thomas Linton), London : Burns and Oates, 1978, 1986, p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> For example: René Latourelle *et. al.*, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, Crossroad, 1999, Metz's mentor Karl Rahner *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Seabury Press, 1978, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church*, Crossroads, 1984, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building stones for a Fundamental Theology*, Ignatius Press, 1987.

<sup>53</sup> O'Collins, S.J., Gerald, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

enlightenment concerning the real processes at work in modernity”<sup>55</sup>. Yet, while fundamental theology seeks to give a reasoned response to the rationalism of the Enlightenment that attacked traditional Christian beliefs, and in this regard has a shared concern with apologetics, it is not simply apologetics given a different name. The apologetic element is enmeshed in wider theological reflection in which it looks to give an account of the hope of Christian belief (1 Peter 3:15)<sup>56</sup>. A key element of this wider theological reflection constitutive of Metz’s fundamental approach is the establishment of multiple perspectives around key themes and a “pattern of questioning”<sup>57</sup>.

Influences – Rahner, Balthasar, Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer.

So far we have described Metz as a Roman Catholic theologian and have noted that he was both a student and friend of Karl Rahner. The influence of the older man’s theology upon his younger compatriot is well documented by commentators on Metz and by Metz himself. This influence was not a slavish following of Rahner but was marked by a friendship and respect stronger than any theological disagreements. Thus, while Metz rejects Rahner’s transcendental method he writes two essays in which he expresses his appreciation of Rahner: *Do we miss Karl Rahner* and *Karl Rahner’s struggle for the Theological dignity of humankind*<sup>58</sup>. In particular Metz appreciated that in Rahner there was a unity between theology and life experience. He states: “In him, work and person, life

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<sup>55</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 43.

<sup>56</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 19

<sup>57</sup> Downey, John K., *Love’s Strategy*, Harrisburg : Trinity Press, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Both essays can be found in In Metz, *A Passion for God* (Trans. J. Matthew Ashley), New York : Paulist Press, 1998.

and theology, were seamlessly one”<sup>59</sup>. This unity of theology and life experience is critical to his development of a political theology, for if theology is to be political then Metz is adamant that it must be attentive to concrete historical-social situations in which the human subject is not obscured by metaphysical abstractions or categories that are so general the human subject is anonymous within them. It was for this reason that Metz rejected the transcendental method of Rahner, as we have discussed previously. With regards to other areas of continuity, discontinuity and indebtedness we shall make passing comment where appropriate.

While Rahner’s influence upon Metz has been well documented there are other significant theological influences upon him that are worth highlighting. It is known that the young Metz was “fascinated” by von Balthasar in the 1950’s and that the Swiss theologian’s essay “theology and holiness” had “a tremendous influence” upon him<sup>60</sup>. This influence was perhaps reinforced given Balthasar at one-time collaborated with Rahner in a “plan for the reform of Catholic theology”<sup>61</sup>. Our aim in commenting upon Balthasar is not to claim a direct influence upon Metz, but is to make the more modest observation that, like Rahner, Balthasar was influenced by Protestant theology and this is an influence we can also detect in Metz. We can, therefore, aver that as a young

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<sup>59</sup> Metz, *Do we miss Karl Rahner?* in *PG.*, p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> Metz, *HAH.*, p. 20.

<sup>61</sup> Kerr, Fergus, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 122.

theologian Metz was influenced by and admired older Catholic theologians who were open to Protestant theology and whose theology reflected this influence<sup>62</sup>.

For Rahner and Balthasar the Protestant thinker influential upon their thought was Karl Barth. Metz likewise acknowledges a debt to Barth, but it is the Lutheran pairing of Søren Kierkegaard and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who are of greater influence upon him. He states: “Beside those who were struggling with me toward a new political theology,” an acknowledgement that would include Protestant theologians Dorothee Sölle and Jürgen Moltmann, “theological names like Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer became important to me”<sup>63</sup>.

Metz argues that those who suffer have a special authority to speak about suffering, and in this Bonhoeffer, due to the stance he takes towards the Jews and his incarceration and death in Buchenwald and Flossenbürg, assumes this authority. There is also in Bonhoeffer’s life a coming together of theology and “life history” that we noted Metz respected in Rahner. Indeed this coming together of theology and life history strikes at the heart of what political theology is about<sup>64</sup>. In offering an explanation of this new political theology that reflects upon concrete situations in an “effort to find a language that is liberating and redeeming” Metz quotes Bonhoeffer from *Widerstand und Ergebung*<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> While Metz reached a point where he did not want to follow the theological route Balthasar took they nevertheless maintained a relationship of “mutual respect” in which the two corresponded albeit sporadically into the nineteen-eighties. See Metz, *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>63</sup> Metz, *On the Way to a Postidealist Theology*, in *PG*, p. 34. It would make an interesting study to explore in what ways Moltmann, Sölle and Metz struggled together toward a new political theology; however, such a study is out with the scope of this thesis.

<sup>64</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 103, *FHS*, p. 204.

<sup>65</sup> Metz, *LS.*, p. 32

It will be a new language, which will horrify men, and yet overwhelm them by its power. It will be the language of a new righteousness and truth, a language which proclaims the peace of God with men and the advent of his kingdom<sup>66</sup>.

This proclamation takes the form of a social criticism informed by eschatological promises and a sensitivity, decisively informed by Christ's cry from the cross and a reading of Matthew 25, to those who are oppressed and suffering.

The quote above, taken from Bonhoeffer's *Thoughts on the baptism of D.W.R.*, was written from his prison cell. This letter contains other thoughts that would become prominent in Metz, but with which Metz does not directly credit Bonhoeffer. These thoughts are, the relationship between thought, action and will and that "today we have almost succeeded in banishing pain from our lives. To be as free from pain as possible had become one of our unconscious ideals"<sup>67</sup>. Metz similarly writes: "I see a new stoicism looming that, in order to no longer experience pain, denies that to live is to struggle"<sup>68</sup>.

In Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard Metz finds allies in his development of a critique of modernity and bourgeois religion and society. While he credits Barth and Bonhoeffer with recognising the "profoundly bourgeois character of religion" by the "liberal impoverishment of religion" it is in Kierkegaard he finds

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<sup>66</sup> Bonhoeffer, D., *Letters and Papers from Prison (Trans. Not noted)*, London : SCM Press, 1953, p. 160. Metz, *LS*, p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158

<sup>68</sup> Metz, Johann, B., and Rahner, Karl, *Ermutigung zum Gebet*, Freiburg : Herder, 1977, p. 36.



greatest support and inspiration for his own critique of the bourgeoisie<sup>69</sup>. He comments:

Kierkegaard's critique of 'Christendom' may be understood already as an early form of criticism of bourgeois religion in Christianity ...according to Kierkegaard, Christendom ...had more or less identified Christian existence with the 'natural' existence of the bourgeois; a covert transformation of the Christian praxis of discipleship into the bourgeois way of life took place. In the form of Christendom Christianity had once again successfully come to terms with the power of the prevailing society, in this case with that of bourgeois society. Yet at what price? No less a price, so claims Kierkegaard, than the abolition of Christianity itself ...I regard this as a primary and eminently prophetic critique of Christianity as bourgeois religion, one in no way obsolete today, but – for both Catholics and Protestants – more urgent than ever before<sup>70</sup>.

The themes Metz identified above in his reading of Kierkegaard, Christian existence as bourgeois lifestyle and the loss of Christian discipleship that threatens the very existence of Christianity, become central to Metz's political theology. Important to Metz's understanding of political theology and its critique of modernity is a renewed call to Christian discipleship. His book on religious orders, *Zeit der Oreden?*, is an appeal for revivifying Christian discipleship that once again draws upon Kierkegaard. Metz, drawing upon and quoting what he had written in his synodic document *Unsere Hoffnung*, calls upon the Church to enter upon "the way of following and imitating Christ"<sup>71</sup>. To explain what it means to follow and imitate Christ he turns to the concept of putting on Christ and Kierkegaard's explanation of what this means. This is significant for two reasons: firstly, it indicates that Metz was not just receptive to Kierkegaard's cultural critique, but that he is also influenced by elements of the Danish

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<sup>69</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 58.

<sup>70</sup> Metz, *EC*, p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> Metz, *FC*, p. 34, See also *Unsere Hoffnung*, II:3.

thinker's Christology. Secondly, in our discussion of Metz's phrase *Leiden an Gott* in Chapter 4 we shall return to this theme of putting on Christ where his reliance upon Kierkegaard is instructive.

Kierkegaard also proves to be an influential voice for Metz on several other themes. He finds in Kierkegaard thoughts on mourning and a bourgeois exchange culture that echo his own thoughts. He also finds in Kierkegaard an energetic opposition to Nietzsche's recurrence of the same in which this concept is refuted by an argument in which memory is key<sup>72</sup>.

Metz warms to Kierkegaard's and Bonhoeffer's Christo-centric theologies that "stress a praxis of discipleship as an element of Christology itself, opposing a Christology made up purely of ideas, but only know of discipleship in the form of individual ethical praxis"<sup>73</sup>. Indeed, there are also Christological similarities between Metz's secularisation thesis and Bonhoeffer. In his manuscripts on ethics, posthumously published in 1948, Bonhoeffer writes that a world "withdrawn" from Christ would be an arbitrary world. Likewise, "a Christianity that withdraws from the world falls prey to unnaturalness, irrationality, triumphalism, and arbitrariness"<sup>74</sup>. It is in Jesus Christ that God has reconciled the "reality of God and the reality of the world"<sup>75</sup>. The implication of this is that for the Christian "there is nowhere to retreat from the world, neither externally

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<sup>72</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 51, pp. 81 – 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259 n12.

<sup>74</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 6, Trans. Ilse Tödt, Heinz Eduard Todt, Ernst Feil and Clifford Green, English Edition Edited by Clifford J Green)*, Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2009, p. 61.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

nor into the inner life”<sup>76</sup>. By ‘externally’ presumably he has some conception of a religious sphere in mind as an alternative to the world. These thoughts anticipate Metz in many ways, in that he too argues for an understanding of the secularity of the world based on God’s acceptance of this world in the incarnation<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, Bonhoeffer’s insistence that we must not seek to retreat into the inner-life is one Metz would whole-heartedly endorse.

### Chronological Development.

Three prominent commentators and interpreters of Metz - Gaspar Martinez, Rebecca Chopp and J. Matthew Ashley - chart and emphasise the importance of chronological theological development in Metz. Ashley finds Chopp’s understanding of Metz “penetrating” and comments that he “learned a great deal” from her analysis<sup>78</sup>. She identifies three stages of development: (i) examination of “the historical consciousness of the subject,” (ii) relating “the historical consciousness of the subject to God through an interpretation of Christian symbols”, and (iii) identifying “the explicit witness of Christianity”<sup>79</sup>. There is, we contend, a stage prior to Chopp’s first stage. This stage is characterised by a turn away from scholastic and Neo-scholastic theology to the development of a practical fundamental theology that he calls political theology. We thus suggest four stages of development. Chopp’s three stages build upon this prior stage with each stage in her analysis of development of Metz seen not

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>77</sup> See Metz, *Theology of the World* (Trans. William Glen-Doepel). London : Herder and Herder, 1969, pp. 21 – 50.

<sup>78</sup> Ashley, James Matthew, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the work of Johann Baptist Metz*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998, p. 253.

<sup>79</sup> Chopp, Rebecca, *The Praxis of Suffering*, Oregon : Wipf and Stock, 1986, pp. 64 – 65.

as a rejection of the stage prior, but the intensification of core themes through the appearance, reappearance or transformation of existing categories and themes. Before moving onto the themes we have identified a brief word is required to explain our four stages of development in his thought.

In chapter 1 we noted Jeanrond's observation that Roman Catholicism during the Weimar years was characterised by a Neo-scholastic method that inhibited its ability to shape or influence wider German culture. Metz's political theology responds to this inability to shape and influence wider German culture, for to pursue a politics of belief sensitive to the sufferings of others presents fundamental challenges to the dominant culture and lifestyle of society. This rejection of scholastic and Neo-scholastic thought has three further principal features.

Firstly, medieval scholasticism made a distinction between theology and spirituality without separating them. However, over time "that once helpful distinction became a fatal separation, one that intensified in the ever wider split between theory and practice in modern thought"<sup>80</sup>. Metz agrees that this is a fatal separation and seeks to re-unite the theological and spiritual in a unity expressed by his term "mystical-political"<sup>81</sup>. This rejection is therefore not so much a rejection of Thomism *per se* but of the misappropriation of this tradition. The second feature this move denoted is the rejection of a subjectless theoretical theology that does not speak of and to the complex and sinful concrete situations actual persons find themselves in. It is this rejection of a theology that can

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<sup>80</sup> Tracy, David, quoted in Ashley, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Metz, *GGG.*, p. 222.

continue as if the tragedies of history have not happened that is the primary reason for his rejection of scholasticism. The growing consciousness and import to his thought of Auschwitz is the key to this. Thirdly, within this move we detect a revision in his relationship to the theology of his friend and mentor Karl Rahner. Ashley calls this a move away from “transcendental Thomism”, a term that in itself needs exposition<sup>82</sup>.

Here transcendental refers to a combination of two previous meanings, that is its Scholastic meaning and its Kantian use. In Scholastic theology transcendental referred to the infinite horizon of human knowledge and to what is universal to all being. Thus, happiness is transcendental as we can apply this to all that exists. In Kant, put simply, transcendence is the subjective condition of possible knowledge, and as such refers to the *a priori* conditions of possible knowledge. Transcendental theology combines elements of the scholastic with the Kantian understanding and has its roots in the work of Joseph Maréchal. The Belgian Jesuit priest and philosopher sought to remain true to St. Thomas while at the same time adopting an epistemology based on Kant’s premise that we cannot have direct knowledge of a ‘thing’<sup>83</sup>. However, this theological method reaches its mature and most influential expression under Karl Rahner. Following Maréchal and others, Rahner works within this basic Thomist and Kantian framework, stating that theology is transcendental when it investigates

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<sup>82</sup> Ashley, Op. Cit., p. vii.

<sup>83</sup> Fiorenza, Francis Schüssler, and Galvin, John P., (Eds.), *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2011, p. 29.

the “*a priori* conditions in the believer for the knowledge of important truths of faith”<sup>84</sup>.

Our second stage of development in Metz, the historical consciousness of the subject, is primarily concerned with the thesis he puts forward in *Zur Theologie der Welt*, that we must accept the secularity of the world by letting the world be the world. In developing his own thesis Metz takes up and modifies the thought of, among others, Friedrich Gogarten who had proposed that secularisation is the result of Christ at work in history<sup>85</sup>. Metz therefore joins Gogarten and others in rejecting theological responses that understand the secularity of the world as opposed to a Christian comprehension of the world. He argues that such an understanding tears history asunder, dividing it into salvation history and world history<sup>86</sup>. He therefore proposed that there is only one history, a unified history in which God is constantly “in front of it as its free, uncontrolled future”<sup>87</sup>. This understanding of secularity turns both the ‘secularisation thesis’ and, as we shall discuss below, modernity on their head. The secularity of the world, contra the secularisation thesis, is not “a dethroning of Christ within the world’ but has arisen because of the Christ event and is “the decisive point of his dominion in history”<sup>88</sup>. Moreover, Christ does not merely “reign over history” or claim it “retrospectively” but gives history its “basis”<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Rahner, Karl, *Transcendental Theology*, in *Sacramentum Mundi: Volume 6*, London : Burns & Oats, 1970, 6:287

<sup>85</sup> Gogarten, Friedrich, *Die Säkularisation als theologisches Problem*, Stuttgart, 1953.

<sup>86</sup> Metz, *Zur Theologie der Welt*, Mainz : Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1968, 1979, pp. 12 - 13.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Importantly, we should understand that when Metz talks of ‘the world’ he is making a contrast with ‘nature’ and is not referring to something that is fixed, a canvas upon which history takes place, but something that “comes into being through the historical actions that affect it”<sup>90</sup>. The world, accepted in its “eschatological finality” irrevocably in Christ, must become “what it already is through the deed of Jesus Christ ...[that is] the kingdom of God and man”<sup>91</sup>. The world has not already become this kingdom. It is “both accepting and yet protesting” against this future which means there is always an ambivalence to history and the world”<sup>92</sup>. That “God does not do violence to what he accepts” means he “accepts the other precisely as different from himself” and this theological point forms the underpinning for Metz’s later insistence that the other must be accepted in his or her otherness. This means the world is set free into “its own undisguised being, its non-divine reality (*ins Eigene und Eigentliche, ins Unverstellte ihre nichtgöttlichen Wirklichkeit*)”<sup>93</sup>.

That the world is accepted by God, which is simultaneously its freedom, is a profound critique by Metz upon modernity and the claims it makes regarding freedom. Given history finds its basis in Christ, so freedom to act within history also finds its basis in Christ. This freedom to act means there is a dialectical relationship to suffering in the world. The freedom of the world and man’s capacity to freely act within it entails openness to “suffering and

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22, p. 21.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

concupiscence”<sup>94</sup>. The world has not yet attained its eschatological perfection, nor can it within history, and therefore suffering can make an appearance. There is another sense in which the secularisation of the world means it is a world of suffering. Given Christ’s incarnation is “of decisive importance for the reality of history itself” as we are faithful to Christ so we experience the world as Christ experienced it, as a world in rebellion to God’s acceptance, as a place of cruciform suffering and death.

These thoughts regarding the secularisation of the world and its freedom provide the rationale for Metz’s anthropological turn and emphasis on history and eschatology. He states: “We experience the world as the world of man ... it has a strict anthropocentric orientation”<sup>95</sup>. The announcement that the world is the ‘world of man’ presents him with the opportunity to develop his thought by reflecting upon sin. So far Metz has described the secularisation of the world as it should be, however, the reality of sin means that the world we encounter is in a “disfigured secular and alienated form”<sup>96</sup>. Consequently the “modern process of secularisation” cannot simply be identified with the “secularity of the world that Christ made possible and intended”<sup>97</sup>. A feature of this disfigured secularity is the adoption of new myths and in particular a “naïve belief in progress, of a paradise on earth, or in a tragic nihilism and resigned scepticism”<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>97</sup> Metz, *TW.*, pp. 40 – 1.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.



Only a Christian understanding of the world can accept it freely in its secular form without forcing upon it that which is alien and not proper to it. The world requires to be demythologised from the new myths that disfigure its secularity, so that the world is experienced by human kind not as alienated from ‘man’, but as a sphere of freedom in which history has as its inherent goal God’s future. It is *not* the rationalism of the Enlightenment and modernity that demythologises the world but it is Christianity and in doing so secures the worldliness of the world. Grace mediated by the Church as a “tangible sign” of grace “perfects the true worldliness of the world”, a worldliness, given its eschatological content, that cannot be fully granted within this present age. Thus, in our imitation of the incarnation – given the incarnation is the act in which God accepts the world as other – we enact the “*liberating* acceptance of the world in Jesus Christ” and in this imitation of Christ we “accept the suffering involved”<sup>99</sup>. That men and women have a role to play in liberating the world to its proper worldliness means that human freedom is the correlate of the freedom of the world. Metz therefore talks of a “hominized world”, which just as secularity exists as a distorted secularity, so the hominized world is also distorted and “appears as a dehumanised world” which threatens what it is to be human and destroys basic human relations such as “marriage, friendship and fraternity”<sup>100</sup>.

If the secularity of the world is a focus of *Zur Theologie der Welt* then with the publication of *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft* we note a shift from the

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55 (Emphasis added).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

more abstract concept of world to the “concrete historical-social situations in which subjects find themselves: their experiences, their suffering, struggles and obstacles”<sup>101</sup>. This marks a move from a focus on the world to the history of that world. The theme of a ‘hominized world’, introduced in *ZW*, while not specifically referred to by that title, is taken up and developed in *GGG*. In this later work the thought of a true secularity and a distorted secularity is, with his focus on ‘concrete historical-social situation’, transposed onto the Enlightenment. He therefore presents us with the thought that there is a true enlightenment, not yet realised, which leads to human freedom and a distorted enlightenment in which we are alienated one from the other and from our selves. The realisation of this true enlightenment is key to his project and important to this are the “categories” he develops.

#### The Conversion of Bourgeois Consciousness – Solidarity and Memory.

Metz’s “categories” of solidarity and memory are first clearly articulated for us in *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft* and form two axes of a triad of categories that he develops in this work and which remain integral to the rest of his theological project<sup>102</sup>. The third category he developed is narrative<sup>103</sup>. Metz makes a brief theological “apology” for narrative because, convinced of its importance, he finds it absent in “recent philosophical and theological works on the German market”<sup>104</sup>. While that may have been the case in Germany 1972, today narrative is a well-known category. This is particularly so in the English

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<sup>101</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 23

<sup>102</sup> Metz, *GGG*, pp. 177 – 227.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197 – 219.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

speaking academic world where narrative has achieved a prominence in philosophy under the influence of Alasdair MacIntyre, in theology under the influence of Hans Wilhelm Frei, and in Christian ethics and political theology through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. This contemporary familiarity with narrative, and concomitantly its critique, means that much of what Metz argued for is now familiar. This familiarity allows us to include consideration of the category of narrative not under its own heading but within our treatment of the category of memory. Furthermore, this approach is validated by the “inner relationship” between memory and narrative that means consideration of one category invokes the other category<sup>105</sup>. Our approach of emphasising the category of memory, but also including a consideration of narrative, allows us to underscore the connection and dependence of these categories without imposing a foreign structure on Metz’s thought.

The context for the discussion of Metz’s categories of memory and solidarity is what Chopp has termed the conversion of bourgeois consciousness, and with this the transformation of bourgeois society. An entry point into his thoughts on this is his collection of talks given in the two years after the publication of *GGG* gathered and published as *Jenseits bürgerlicher Religion: Reden über die Zukunft des Christentums*<sup>106</sup>.

In *Jenseits bürgerlicher Religion* Metz introduces the idea of a conversion of hearts as a necessary condition to avoid what he sees as an impending ecological

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>106</sup> Metz, J.B., *Jenseits bürgerlicher Religion: Reden über die Zukunft des Christentums*, Mainz : Grünewald, 1980.

crisis. He calls this conversion an “anthropological revolution”<sup>107</sup>. He does not directly develop his thoughts on the ecological crisis, rather this issue serves as a means to introduce what he terms the “principle of subjugation” that is developed in the direction of human kind’s alienation from each other and from ourselves<sup>108</sup>. This principle is connected with the mastery of the Modern Age over the earth in which “man understands himself as a dominating, subjugating individual over against nature”<sup>109</sup>. As such it is a principle concerned with the exercise of power that forms man’s identity to the degree that it can be stated that “man is by subjugating”<sup>110</sup>. This domination and subjugation extends beyond the exertion of power over nature but includes “our total sociocultural life” in which it has become the “regulating principle of all interpersonal relations”<sup>111</sup>. It manifests itself not only in our *use* of nature, but also in our *use* of each other as commodities in which we become further alienated one from the other. Metz states:

An identity thus formed through the principles of domination and subjugation makes the individual profoundly disconnected and, in the strict sense of the term, egoistic<sup>112</sup>.

This dislocation is not merely from each other but also place and history, and in this way is connected to a loss of memory. He comments: “people’s subjugation begins when their memories are taken away”<sup>113</sup>. This statement is explained, in part, when he further comments that “every colonisation takes its principle

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<sup>107</sup> Metz, *EC*, p. 41.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 106.

here”<sup>114</sup>. Whether this colonisation is that of one people over another, a political ideology over another or the anonymous forces of technology and economics displacing traditional values and means of production, a history of the victors replaces the memory of suffering and the mechanisms of subjugation are justified in the name of enlightenment and progress<sup>115</sup>. While Metz’s language is reminiscent of Marx it is not Marx’s “locomotive of world history” he describes or seeks. The revolution Metz is seeking applies a “handbrake” to the locomotive; it is the “interruption” of history in which “everything keeps going on as before (W. Benjamin)”<sup>116</sup>. The emphasis is on “a new subjectivity” a “revolutionary change of consciousness”, as he is convinced that changes in the social and economic spheres will fail if not accompanied, or proceeded, by an anthropological revolution<sup>117</sup>.

This conversion requires a reshaping of the relationship between private and public spheres so “non-dominating virtues such as gratitude and friendliness, the capacity for suffering and sympathy, grief and tenderness” are not consigned to some privatised sphere of the individual or family<sup>118</sup>. These ‘weak’ virtues seem to take seriously what we learn from the incarnation and from the Apostle Paul: God’s power is displayed in the paradoxical terms of weakness; it is the weak and foolish things of this world that display His power (1 Cor. 1:27, 2 Cor. 12:9). It is these weak categories that in part interrupt the status quo, but the work of interruption has two other related facets: liberation and solidarity.

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Metz, *EC*, p. 36, *FHS*, pp. 105 – 7.

<sup>116</sup> Metz, *EC*, pp. 41 – 3.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

For those of us in the West, Metz's political theology is a theology of liberation *not* from "poverty and misery, but rather from our wealth and our totally excessive prosperity ...from our consumption in which we are ultimately consuming our very selves"<sup>119</sup>. Importantly given our focus on suffering he notes that this is *not* a theology of liberation from "our sufferings but from our apathy"<sup>120</sup>. As such this theology of liberation is distinct from Latin American liberation theology because our contexts differ and thus the specificity of the claims these differing contexts make also differ<sup>121</sup>. As such it requires a radical reassessment of what is important in life, and also how life is to be sustained. This theme of sustenance is posed by Metz as a question, what "is the food that nourishes us?" with clear allusion to John 6:35, 48 and 4:34<sup>122</sup>.

The second strand to this conversion is "our solidarity with the poor and exploited peoples of the earth"<sup>123</sup>. Metz paints for us the image of a communion table in which our attention is drawn to who our Eucharistic table companions are. This highly evocative and fruitful image is one we shall return to in a later chapter. For now we note that it is indicative of the growing influence upon his thought from the time of writing *GGG* to *JbR* of the challenge of the non-European world and the catastrophe of Auschwitz. These combine to confront European self-understanding and Christian theology. Metz contends that we must not live with our backs turned to Auschwitz as a concrete occurrence of evil and suffering representative of the history of suffering. Moreover, Auschwitz

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Included in Metz's address by inference would also be North America.

<sup>122</sup> Metz, *Ibid.*, pp. 34 – 47.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

does not merely confront us with suffering on an overwhelming scale but with the failure of the humanity of the human race. For Metz it stands as a testimony to human kind's failure to act. Likewise, the catholicity of the church and the shift of Christianity from countries of the 'North' to the 'South' means that we in the North cannot carry on with our backs turned to the church in the global South. He states:

We who are the Christians of the first world are no longer allowed to understand and live our Christian life separate from the provocation and the prophecy that thrust their way to us out of the poor churches. Their cry for liberation and justice must be matched, in our situation, by the will to *a conversion of hearts and a revision of life* – a will which has certainly to take an organised political form as well<sup>124</sup>.

Here we have in his words what political theology as practical fundamental theology is about: the conversion of hearts and a revision of life. Under the tutelage of Modernity our hearts were transformed by the emergence of “the bourgeois person” who turned the “genuinely Christian notion of social criticism and practice of freedom” into a private “moral rectitude” that exists “unproblematically with society”<sup>125</sup>. Auschwitz and the non-European world present to us a mirror that helps us see that the Christian's coexistence with society has distorted our hearts and understanding of the Gospel. Metz argues that we must understand the gospel of Jesus Christ as transformative and liberating not only in an inward pietistic fashion, but transformative and liberating in the public and political realms as well. Metz, like many thinkers before and after him, is concerned that faith thought of as solely a matter of the

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<sup>124</sup> Metz, *Ibid.*, p. vii. (Emph. Mine.)

<sup>125</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 42.

inner life makes ethics a private-individual matter and cannot connect the life of Christian discipleship with the daily life of a teacher, plumber, or factory worker.

For Metz theology and the church face a crisis that is simultaneously a crisis for political life and society. However, this crisis “has not really been ascertained, never mind overcome, and therefore continues to exist”<sup>126</sup>. The crisis he refers to is the multiple implications of the rise of “a new person ...the rise of the bourgeois individual”<sup>127</sup>. The rise of this individual is intimately connected with the Enlightenment, given this individual “is the one who finds expression in the Enlightenment; he is the subject inside the subject”<sup>128</sup>. Thus, Metz’s critique of the Enlightenment is simultaneously a critique of the bourgeois subject and *vice versa*. Given he considers the rise of the bourgeois individual to have occasioned several interrelated crises for theology and the church he is critical of theology that proceeds as if the Enlightenment did not occur and theology that uncritically adopts the tenets of the Enlightenment whole scale, thus exacerbating the crisis. What he calls for is an engagement with the Enlightenment that takes the form of a “theological enlightenment of the Enlightenment and its subject [*Subjekt*] the bourgeoisie [*den Bürger*]”<sup>129</sup>. It is important to understand that Metz is not arguing against the concept of the subject in general. He is arguing against the appearance and dominance of a particular type of subject, the bourgeois subject, as he argues that this subject denies others their subjecthood and consigns them to a position of non-identity.

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>128</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 47

<sup>129</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 46.



Understanding Metz on this issue is further complicated by the difficulty in translating the German word *Subjekt* into English. He writes: “I have not found an adequate English term to translate the German word *Subjekt*. *Subjekt* is not equivalent to ‘person’ or ‘individual’”<sup>130</sup>. For Metz the subject is formed not in private but “by means of social and historical intersubjectivity”<sup>131</sup>. This gives Metz’s subject what he terms a “constitutional and chronic vulnerability”, as depriving a person access to the public realm of social and historical intersubjectivity consigns them to a position of non-identity. What is at issue in Metz’s discussion regarding *Subjekts*, especially when this is in the context of those who suffer and our solidarity with those who suffer, is the agency of the subject. We shall where appropriate translate Metz’s use of the German noun *Subjekts* with the phrase, ‘the agency of the subject’. For him, to be a subject is in a very fundamental sense to be capable of agency. The key issue is the use and denial of agency and the responsibility with regards to how our agency is used. It should not be used in such a way that our actions consign others to a position of not being a subject capable of their own agency.

The issue for Metz is not therefore individuality versus some notion of the collective. Metz would differentiate between individuality and the “isolated individual”, that in as much as the subject is an individual he or she is a person-in-relation with others. The issue with regards to the bourgeois is therefore what kind of subject this individual is and how this individual relates to the others that make up society both local and global. His issue with the bourgeois subject is not

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<sup>130</sup> Metz, *Theology Today*, in Downey, John K. (ed.), *Love’s Strategy*, p. 69.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

that he or she is an individual but that the public realm of the bourgeois individual denies a social and historical intersubjectivity to the stranger who is not part of that culture or system, thus consigning him or her to non-identity, to the position of not being a subject. If the stranger is to be a subject then there is the need for the conversion of the bourgeois individual into a transformed subject of a “radical enlightenment of the Enlightenment”<sup>132</sup>.

This bourgeois subject is at the mercy of the “process of privatisation” that Metz notes in the “first and decisive moment of crisis for the Enlightenment”<sup>133</sup>. This process is a crisis in at least two respects. Firstly, it isolates the bourgeois subject from traditions and their authority in the name of individual freedom. This results in values and religion becoming private rather than public matters that not only creates an unhealthy division between private and public matters but also results in a loss of values or traditions held in common within society. Secondly, the loss of comprehensive values and traditions creates a vacuum in the public sphere that is filled by the principle of exchange. The solution to this crisis, and the crises that issue from it that we shall consider below, is the conversion of the subject. The bourgeois subject requires to undergo a conversion as part of a “radical enlightenment of the Enlightenment: that enables the converted subject to live in a “solidaristic way of being human beings”<sup>134</sup>.

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<sup>132</sup> Metz, *FHS*, pp. 43 – 5.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>134</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 51.

This crisis of the Enlightenment and its chief product the bourgeois subject manifests itself under four further interrelated crises that take their cue from the issue of privatisation. These are: tradition, authority, metaphysical reason and religion. At the heart of each of these crises are the principles that shape and sustain the bourgeois person. Values that used to shape and sustain the members of society, and therefore society itself, have either become private matters with no public relevance or have been rejected altogether. That these are crises for the church and theology but have societal and cultural consequences indicates that for Metz the well functioning society, the good political life, is one with a theological understanding of the subject and common life. With this said it is worth remembering that for Metz theology is not merely thinking or belief but is also always *praxis*. We cannot merely think about what could form and maintain the good subject and the good society, but we must participate in those actions that will at least set us off on the journey towards this way of being and forming society. In contrast, the bourgeois are shaped and their culture and society maintained almost exclusively by “the principle of exchange” that underpins all social relations<sup>135</sup>. Under this principle it is only those values that are productive or can be monetised that shape the public realm. Values not useful in this exchange society become a matter for the “sphere of the private”, that is “individual freedom”<sup>136</sup>. Values such as love, mourning, friendship and solidarity with those who suffer have no political or public efficacy under this principle and as a consequence in the bourgeois society.

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

This hegemony of the principle of exchange coalesces with the principle of domination that we have noted before. The loss and rejection by “the white bourgeois” of “any comprehensive traditions, let alone religious traditions” means that exchange and domination as principles of life and society are unfettered by any wisdom from the past<sup>137</sup>. Tradition becomes “the private whim” of the bourgeois individual and history is instrumentalised as historicism<sup>138</sup>. This not only dramatically changes who and what is authoritative but this ahistoricism negates the subject in history so that suffering in history becomes faceless and of little contemporary relevance or concern.

Given “authority is inseparable from tradition” the exchange of history for historicism is accompanied by the exchange of an authority with roots in tradition for an authority that is merely technique. Authority becomes technical reason under which the principles of exchange and domination can flourish. Critical of this technical authority and of an overbearing institutional paternalism which can exert itself as an authority, Metz proposes an authority based on “critical-liberating reason, ” in the “demanding authority of freedom and justice and the recompensing [*einklagende*] authority of suffering”<sup>139</sup>. Whereas authority in a bourgeois exchange culture is linked to property and an autonomy that flows from this, authority in Metz’s radical enlightenment seeks the “capacity of others to be subjects [*Subjektsein-Können*]”<sup>140</sup>. By making freedom, justice and suffering authority and thus attributing to them the power

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<sup>137</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 48.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

to shape the identity of the subjects in society as public actors Metz seeks the reversal [*metanoia*] of the oppression by the bourgeois subject in which others are placed in the situation of non-identity. Attentiveness to suffering means that freedom and justice cannot be egocentric but must always be for the other and thus seek the capacity of others to be subjects. Metz emphasises this point by repeating that it is the task of religion to “advocate that all persons be subjects [*Subjektsein*] in solidarity”<sup>141</sup>. With this it becomes clear why his category of solidarity is of interest to us and must be at the forefront of our investigation and critique of Metz’s political theology and the role of suffering in it.

Metz avers that the Enlightenment as a critique of classical metaphysics was complicit in elevating “the propertied citizen to the status of the bearer of political reason”<sup>142</sup>. This is, he argues, merely the “self-assertion of a new elite” under which a *praxis* of domination rather than liberation is to the fore. This domination of nature and of each other is governed “in the interest of the market” and as such the interests of people as subjects is lost sight of<sup>143</sup>. By suggesting that freedom, justice and suffering are authoritative Metz proposes a meta-physics that is liberating and which seeks to lift those whose status is non-identity to the status of subjects who have a full part to play in public and political life.

In raising the issue of religion in crisis Metz brings us full circle as we return to the issue of privatised values. The Enlightenment critique of

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

<sup>142</sup> Metz, *FHS.*, p. 56.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

metaphysical reason and its replacement by technical reason in service of the principle of exchange inevitably leads to a critique of religion. Metz points the finger at natural religion as a means by which the Enlightenment tamed Christianity and transformed it into an extremely privatised religion. At issue here is the matter of revelation. As we shall see in Chapter 4 Metz argues that the suffering of Christ and in particular his cry from the cross is at the heart of God's revelation to us. This tallies with his insistence that suffering is authoritative.

In *JbR*, and his later writings, these themes are intensified by the growing place of eschatology in his theology, the irruption of 'poor churches' of the non-European world upon our consciousness, and consideration of Christianity in relation to the Jews and after Auschwitz.

If in *GGG* his focus was the bourgeois subject, in *JbR* this shifts to bourgeois religion. His concern is that what he calls the "messianic future" has been transfigured into the endorsement of our own future that we have worked out separately from the gospel. This bourgeois future belongs to our preconceptions and fits nicely with, and is of value to, bourgeois society. The messianic future is characterised by *metanoia* and "the direction of this conversion, the route it takes, is for Christians predetermined [*vorgezeichnet*]. Its name is *discipleship*"<sup>144</sup>. In stating that the direction of conversion, the path it takes us, is predetermined Metz is not commenting on or proposing an understanding of determinism. Rather he is advocating that intrinsic to

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<sup>144</sup> Metz, *JBR*, p. 10. (Italics original to the quote).

conversion is discipleship that is a following of Christ characterised by certain norms that are integral to this following of Christ. We are therefore not in control of what it means to be a disciple; this has been predetermined for us. This conversion necessitates for the bourgeois subject a laying down of their preconceived future, it necessitates a loss of control and a living by faith in the future that God calls us into.

In his criticism of bourgeois theology he takes up, as we have noted, Kierkegaard's critique of 'Christendom'. Conversion in bourgeois religion lacks a change of heart, discipleship lacks a following of Christ, and the "messianic virtues of Christianity" publicly proclaimed – love and acceptance of suffering – are displaced by the "value-structures and goals of the bourgeois way of life (autonomy, power, stability, success)"<sup>145</sup>. These publicly proclaimed virtues cannot be practised within an exchange system as they have no 'value', so have been consigned to the privacy of the family. Metz avers that the "role *money* plays" in bourgeois religion demonstrates clearly the value structures operative within this society<sup>146</sup>. The society he describes is one in which money has gained what he terms a "compensatory function"<sup>147</sup>. The *Kirchensteuer*, (church tax paid in Germany and some other European countries), is partly in view with this comment. Those who pay this tax may adopt an attitude of having done their bit, paid their dues, so the church can act as their representative in looking after the poor. However, the focus of Metz's attention is on the moral link, or lack of a moral link, between how the bourgeois subject accrues their money and the

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>146</sup> Metz, *JBR.*, pp. 16 – 17. *Italics original.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

oppression it causes to others either in their own society or in the global south. By describing the giving of money either in church taxes or as charitable giving as having a compensatory function he raises the moral issue not of wealth *per se*, but of the oppression, suffering and poverty the means of wealth creation in the West commonly produce in non-European countries. In this bourgeois system of exchange the paying of church taxes and giving to aid organisations becomes a “substitute for compassion”, a false or shadow compassion<sup>148</sup>. He states:

Money, often acquired quite mercilessly, becomes the substitute for compassion for the strangers’ pain. It serves to express solidarity and sympathy, to compensate for the renunciation of comprehensive justice, caused by a society over organised around a principle of exchange<sup>149</sup>.

In other words the dominance of the principle of exchange replaces true compassion and solidarity with a compassion that requires no conversion of heart nor a transformed way of life, but merely the giving of money. His problem with the church’s aid organisations is not their existence but that “in the minds of Christians” in Germany they reduce compassion to “a process of the mere giving of money”<sup>150</sup>. For Metz true compassion is informed by “messianic standards” that mean there are “no practical limits to our responsibility”<sup>151</sup>.

Metz’s solution to what he sees as a “looming social apocalypse” in which we seem to be voyeurs of our own and each other’s downfall is *metanoia*<sup>152</sup>. “Nothing is more needed today than a moral and political imagination springing up from a messianic Christianity” for it is only this that

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 9.



can bring about and sustain the moral change of heart needed if we are not just to copy “already accepted political and economic strategies”<sup>153</sup>.

For Metz the global nature of this looming social apocalypse is concretised in the relation of the ‘rich churches’ of Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*) to the ‘poor churches’ of Latin America. The question becomes focused around the survival of “those others who are our Eucharist table companions in the one church”<sup>154</sup>. We shall pick this thought of ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, rich and poor, suffering and non-suffering gathering as Eucharistic table companions in chapter eight. As a sign of messianic hope the church in the West, aware of its role as part of a Eucharistic community and its global dimensions, must learn from its suffering and oppressed brothers and sisters a holiness and militant love that is the fruit of conversion. In this way the struggle for life by the poor and oppressed “must be matched ...by a struggle and resistance against ourselves, against the ingrained ideals of always having more, of always having to increase our affluence”<sup>155</sup>.

Metz notes that in the West there has been a “trend of turning to religion”<sup>156</sup>. However, he is sceptical that this is a sign of hope for the church or society, but thinks it is simply a strategy to defend the *status quo*. It is an inauthentic turn to religion, whereas an “authentic turning to religion ought to mean a turning to conversion, to the messianic praxis of love”<sup>157</sup>. True

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>156</sup> Metz, *JBR.*, p. 25.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

conversion is an on-going act that takes the form of discipleship, which he calls “class treason” [*Klassenverrat*]. By stating that discipleship is class treason he emphasises that despite a seeming return to religion there continues to be a solidarity that those who would be followers of Christ must betray. Our solidarity is with bourgeois religion which symbiotically exists with the principles of exchange and domination. It is based on a love that has the self as its object and is thus a wrongly ordered love in which we cherish our affluence, family and nation, our property and “customary way of life”<sup>158</sup>. We need Christ to be the source and object of our love that our loves be reordered by the “praxis of Christian love” and the “claims” this messianic love places upon us. Being obedient to these claims “may look like treason”: yet, Christ calls us to a different solidarity than our bourgeois solidarity with the means of our preservation, a means that is at the expense of the stranger for whom as we have seen Metz claims we are responsible.

Class treason is, therefore, a call to obedience to God in the face of the “self-preservation” impetus “endemic to our familiar patterns of life”<sup>159</sup>. These patterns of life are synonymous with the bourgeois individual. As such it is the rejection of “the life of domination” epitomised by the attitudes of “grasping and struggling for advantage” typical of those in Western societies<sup>160</sup>. This struggle for domination he calls the “principle of subjugation” and given its link to economics and power it forms part of a critique of modern capitalism and its

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Metz, *EC.*, p. 15.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

insatiable acquisitiveness and reduction of all relations to modes of exchange<sup>161</sup>. This critique of capitalism is part of his ideology critique in which he also critiques socialism both as an ideology and as a system under which this principle of subjugation merely takes a different guise from its appearance in capitalism. Importantly this means that he does not set these ideological economic systems one against the other; both threaten our survival and flourishing as human beings. Read this way it is a challenge for us to not hermeneutically neutralise and massage out the 'hard' sayings of Jesus and end up with a costless gospel based on a 'cheap grace' (Matt. 8:19 – 22, Mk. 10: 23 – 26, Lk. 9: 22 – 27).

#### Solidarity.

As we have already noted, the categories of solidarity, memory, and narrative stand in 'inner' relationship to one another. Metz thus comments, "[M]emory and narrative cannot have their practical character without solidarity, and solidarity cannot achieve its specifically cognitive priority without memory and narrative"<sup>162</sup>. Solidarity is therefore not just the 'cornerstone' for his theology but it "permeates" his themes of dangerous memory as the memory of suffering, narrative, redemption and emancipation, church as a cognitive and emotional minority standing for and witnessing to the *memoria passionis*, human identity, and apocalyptic time and eschatology. It is not our intention to unpack the relationship of each of these themes for this would be to simply regurgitate

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>162</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 175.

Metz. Rather, Metz brings together the intrinsic characteristics of his category of solidarity for us in almost definition like form. He writes:

Solidarity, as a category of practical fundamental theology, is a category of assistance, of supporting and building up [Aufrichtung] the agency of the subject in the face of that which threatens him or her most acutely and in the face of his or her sufferings. Like memory and narrative, it is one of the fundamental rules of a theology and church that want to bring their redemptive and liberating and redemptive force amidst the history of suffering of the people and not over people's heads or passing their painful sense of non-identity<sup>163</sup>.

As stated previously we have chosen to translate Metz's use of *Subjekts* with the phrase, 'agency of the subject'. In choosing this phrasing we make clear Metz's intention that solidarity is an activity that above all else seeks to empower those who are poor or oppressed, to empower those who suffer. This discloses the link between suffering, poverty and oppression with non-identity. By non-identity we understand Metz to be referring to the inability of persons to appear and act in the public and political sphere. Non-identity and its antonym personhood are key for understanding Metz's political theology. It is from the state of non-identity, which is synonymous with suffering or being oppressed or a victim or defeated, that those who live in this state must be redeemed and liberated. Moreover, the concept of redemption evokes the idea of a price being paid for the liberation of the person who is to be redeemed. Thus, there is a price to be paid that is attentiveness to the forces that create and maintain systems under which people suffer and are oppressed. This takes the form of a conversion of heart and a discipleship of class treason, issues we have already considered, that resist these forces.

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

In defining solidarity in these terms we detect an attempt by Metz to claim solidarity as originally a theological category rather than a political category adopted by theology. We shall consider the veracity of this claim below. What is to be noted at this point is that this claim of solidarity as a theological category requires him to differentiate this form of solidarity from what it might conventionally mean in political theory. Hence, this is solidarity “as a category of practical fundamental theology”, a novel delimitation we previously considered, rather than solidarity as a category of political theory. In its theological guise solidarity takes on the attributes of a praxis - it is not merely a sentiment - but just as following Jesus is always a following, so solidarity is always a doing, which requires action. This action is marked by assistance, support and building up, with, as we have noted, the aim of releasing the identity and agency of those who have experienced non-identity. As such, solidarity is much more than simply coming alongside the other or putting oneself in the same condition as the other. If solidarity merely means to come alongside then any transformative power in this concept is attenuated to the point of being inefficacious. Yet, given Metz’s stance of solidarity is connected to a conversion of hearts, then in this form those called to act in solidarity are called to a stance in which they are also transformed. Solidarity as a category of practical fundamental theology is simultaneously the conversion of the bourgeois and the redemption of those who are in situations of non-identity.

So far in our exposition of Metz on solidarity and his use of this concept we have not employed the term ‘justice’ which is unquestionably at the root of what he perceives solidarity to be. This is partly because the term justice is

largely absent from his own discussion of solidarity. His comments on justice in *GGG* are brief and unelaborated. Nevertheless, for all their brevity we think he means for the reader to connect what he says about justice to his concept of solidarity. Discussion of justice in *GGG* takes place under the heading *Gott der Lebenden und der Toten*, in which his concern is “universal justice”<sup>164</sup>. Likewise, his most sustained interaction with the concept of justice, which is also brief, is concerned with universal justice as it relates to the living and the dead<sup>165</sup>. As the heading under which this is discussed in *GGG* Metz looks to affirm that “God is God of the living and the dead, God of universal justice and the resurrection of the dead”<sup>166</sup>. The unity of history, the unity of the human race as the living and the dead means that belief in universal justice raises questions regarding the suffering upon which “social progress” has been built. It raises questions concerning “concrete histories of liberation” within Christianity that Metz believes to be largely absent. On this basis he concludes that universal justice within theology has been an “impotent, subjectless idea”<sup>167</sup>. That solidarity is understood in a “universal sense” and includes the living and the dead firmly links Metz’s thoughts on justice to his concept of solidarity<sup>168</sup>. It is solidarity that practically seeks to outwork universal justice and redeem it from its impotent, subjectless state.

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<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87 – 89.

<sup>165</sup> See, Metz, *Unterwegs zu einer nachidealistischen Theologie*, pp. 209 – 234, in Bauer, Johannes B., *Entwürfe der Theologie*, Salzburg : Styria, 1985.

<sup>166</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 87.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

In framing the category of solidarity in this way he asserts its centrality to Christian life and theology. At the same time he also critiques all “depoliticised” forms of solidarity and what he terms “idyllic-affirmative” uses “of the idea of solidarity”<sup>169</sup>. Depoliticised and idyllic-affirmative solidarity is counterfeit to what Metz believes solidarity must be. Depoliticised solidarity is worked out in private, it is charity “as a private virtue of the I-Thou relation, extending to the field of interpersonal encounter, or at best to charity on the scale of the neighbourhood”<sup>170</sup>. It is the safety of these interpersonal encounters in which the neighbour we meet is ‘like’ us that idyllic solidarity affirms. Within a bourgeois culture dominated by exchange the only solidarity permitted is “an alliance of expediency between partners of equal strength,” thus both the system of exchange and relations restricted to that of between equals must be affirmed and maintained<sup>171</sup>. This romanticised view of suffering is a “merely believed in compassion ...a believed in sympathy in which we remain as apathetic as ever”<sup>172</sup>. It is a romantic idyll in which we remain undisturbed and life can carry on as it always has. He calls such depoliticised approaches “pragmatic humanism”, a coming together that fails to rise to solidarity, as its basis is the contractarian principle of exchange<sup>173</sup>. Thus this principle of exchange is in a perpetual state of antagonism towards the principle of solidarity. We shall in later chapters pick up on Metz’s idea that solidarity must be with those who need justice rather than an alliance between equal partners, a concept that

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>170</sup> Metz, *TW.*, p. 109.

<sup>171</sup> Metz, *EC.*, p. 12

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, *JBR.*, p. 12.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, *FHS.*, p. 210.

distinguishes it from the narrow confines of Marxist class thinking or Aristotelian like only interacting with like.

His development of the category of solidarity is a continuation of his critique of the bourgeois individual whose identity and society is chiefly formed by the principle of exchange. Christian solidarity makes demands upon us as individuals and members of a community; it costs, and as such is not mere sympathy with those who suffer but involves action on our part. It is a call to change our way of living so that it helps bring emancipation to those who suffer.

A key feature of Metz's conception of solidarity is its "universal character" that expands to not only include those who suffer, or those who are poor and exploited, but also "the dead"<sup>174</sup>. Yet, what does it mean to say that solidarity is universal; is this a universal subject, the solidarity *of* all humankind, or a universal object, the solidarity of the church *with* all mankind? To answer this question we must note that for Metz solidarity has a dual structure: it is always a mystical-political practice. It is the mystical dimension that is the universal aspect of solidarity, whereas the political directs our attention to the particular, to the historical. In its mystical dimension the question "solidarity with whom?" is in the foreground, with the political dimension enquiring "solidarity in what form?"<sup>175</sup>. Solidarity for Metz is therefore primarily objective; it is not synonymous with the Marxist call to "unite" or with a religious inspired concept of brother and sisterhood of the human race. Solidarity's attentiveness to the other, noted above, means the difference remains.

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.



What therefore does Metz mean when he says that solidarity includes the dead? Key to understanding this is his statement that this category of solidarity “does not attain its specific cognitive import without memory and narrative”<sup>176</sup>. A solidarity that extends to the dead is “anamnetic solidarity,” a solidarity of memory<sup>177</sup>. This remembrance of the dead prevents us from passing over the negatives in history as if they are outweighed by what we have in modernity named as progress and development. This solidarity causes us to pause and consider the ‘cost’ paid for such progress and to assess if indeed any progress or development has been gained from this ‘cost’. It causes us to pause and ask ‘progress for who?’, ‘what kind of development has been achieved?’ Has greater freedom been attained? Or are we fettered by technological development and economic progress that leads us into vassalage to the autonomous ‘lords’ of modernity? This category thus functions in the present as “a category of the subject at those points where it is being threatened”<sup>178</sup>. The inner-relationship of solidarity and memory, their mutual interpenetration, means the commonly vaunted refrain from the end of each stanza of Kipling’s *Recessional* “Lest we forget”, if conjoined by solidarity with the dead, must include ‘Lest we go there again’ and cause such death. This mystical-universal solidarity is concretised as our remembrance of those who have died shapes the hope that we have both for the present and the future.

Metz’s opening words in *GGG* are about hope and draw on 1 Peter 3:15, our “accounting for the hope that is in you”. He states:

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>177</sup> Metz, *LS.*, p. 80.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

Of what hope do we talk? It is that solidaristic hope in the God of the living and the dead, who calls all people to be subjects (Subjektsein) before his face<sup>179</sup>.

Even the dead are subjects in God's presence because nothing is lost to him. We can hope for those whose identity is being threatened because we know that even if they suffer death they are not lost to God. This knowledge, however, informs how we act in the present. If the dead are subjects before God then they are also not lost to us, they witness to the suffering that robbed them of life and challenge us in how we act to those who are living but whose identity is threatened. And in this way the dead have a particular kind of agency in the present given that even in the present they assume the status of subjects rather than non-persons. Thus, political action arising from an anamnestic solidarity with the dead opens "new possibilities and new criteria" for gaining control over and resisting those forces that threaten the human subject<sup>180</sup>. We shall unpack what Metz means by anamnestic and consider the future content of this remembrance in our consideration of memory below. It is sufficient at this point to note that because the dead are not lost to God that solidarity ultimately takes its bearing from God's faithfulness and commitment to men, women and children. This is why for Metz solidarity is theological. Moreover, because we remember that Christ suffered, died and was raised to life on the third day by God, so this eschatological truth shapes our hope and actions. We live in the hope and expectation of God's vindication. Thus solidarity "becomes a dangerous-liberating memory over and against the mechanisms and forces of the ruling

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<sup>179</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 19.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, *FHS*, pp. 101 – 102.

consciousness and its abstract idea of emancipation”<sup>181</sup>. The “meaning” of emancipation, of freedom and the good life, cannot be dictated by “the victors” in history, but by the history of suffering. The suffering of Christ and his resurrection “shape our action and our hope in its light” and thus define what emancipation is<sup>182</sup>.

In the background to his conception of solidarity and forming part of his critique of all things bourgeois are two competing European rationalities: “occidental rationality” and the rationality of freedom<sup>183</sup>. This is an engagement with his thesis that within the Enlightenment there were two rationalities and we have allowed the wrong one to dominate. Indeed dominance and the “will to power” is what occidental rationality is all about<sup>184</sup>. This anonymous rationality that operates with no specific subjects in mind is active in scientific theory and the technology and information industries. Metz becomes increasingly concerned with mass media and the damaging effects of the Western culture industry. The ubiquity of this medium has led to a European domination of the world via technological civilization, and the “universal domination of occidental rationality”<sup>185</sup>. He is particularly troubled that this has led to a “secondary colonization” of the non-Western world in which persons are held “captive in an artificial world alienating them from their original images, languages and

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>183</sup> Metz, J. B., *Freedom in Solidarity: The Rescue of Reason* (Trans. John Bowden) 1992., in Metz, J.B. and Moltmann, Jürgen, *FF*, p. 72.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>185</sup> Metz, *FF*, p. 33.

history”<sup>186</sup>. In short it is not religion that is the “opium of the poor” but our “mass media culture”<sup>187</sup>. Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the culture industry can be detected as an influence upon Metz’s thoughts in this regard. However, given the importance of memory and history to Metz it is technology and mass information’s ability to cultivate intelligence without history, and passion without morality, that concerns him. This absence of memory, of a history of and for subjects, means that these industries inculcate a lassitude leading to bondage. This technological and information industry induced torpor erodes the resources within a culture that make us sensitive to the suffering of our neighbour and even our own suffering. Furthermore, they distract us from being formed by the biblical traditions that eschew myth, and turn us to God in whom consolation can only truly be found.

His case against occidental rationality includes two other critiques fundamental to his thought: a critique of Hegelian idealism concordant with materialist theories and ideologies; and secondly a critique of “the logic of evolution” which he also calls evolutionary time<sup>188</sup>. This latter critique becomes in his writings an engagement with and critique of Nietzsche and what Metz terms the rise of neo-myths. Drawing on several aspects of Nietzsche, but chiefly his proclamation that “God is dead” and the rise of the *Übermensch*, he draws two

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Metz’s comments on evolution must not be confused with antagonisms between ‘scientific evolution’ and creationism. This is not his concern, and nowhere does he comment on this argument. His concern is primarily to do with concepts aligned to Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence of the same, undergirded by a conception of endless time in which positive progress can and will be made culturally, economically, socially, and technically. Eschatology and apocalyptic Christianity should shape us as a people who know we do *not* have all the time in the world, that time is bounded and Christ’s lordship includes the lordship of time.

conclusions<sup>189</sup>. His first conclusion is that to proclaim the death of God is simultaneously to announce the death of human beings as persons. This loss of subjecthood to the *Übermensch* results in our functioning like robots, “an intelligence without memories, without pathos, without morality” and therefore no ability or capacity to act in solidarity<sup>190</sup>. He argues that Enlightenment rationality as occidental rationality cannot provide any consolation in the face of suffering. To compensate for this it has developed its own mythology, “new irrationalisms” that suppress questions about suffering and consolation while absorbing “anxiety and guilt”<sup>191</sup>. This involved a detachment from history – the metamorphosis of history as memory to ‘facts,’ the transformation of history to an anonymous subject-less historicism. To counter the Enlightenment critique of religious dogmatism and tradition, some of which he thinks is warranted, Metz argues that there is a more radical and robust critique of myth – the biblical traditions. That is “the incapacity really to find comfort in myths or ideas remote from history”<sup>192</sup>.

Metz, keen to counter occidental rationality, outlines the biblical traditions required for this task: the rationality of freedom, specifically the freedom of others. Freedom, as the freedom of the other, is an issue of justice that is not directly developed by Metz. His ‘third thesis on Auschwitz’ becomes

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<sup>189</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Ibid.*, Bk 3. 108, 125, Bk. 5. 343. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche* (Ed. and Trans. Walter Kaufmann), New York Penguin Books, 1968.

<sup>190</sup> Metz, PG., p. 41.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

integrated to this issue in his later thought<sup>193</sup>. The “spirit and culture of a freedom in solidarity” Metz advocates is based in what he calls “anamnestic reason” which we shall consider under the heading of memory below<sup>194</sup>. This anamnestic reason, or “anamnestic culture,” is the essence of the Jewish spirit, of a mode of believing he calls the “synoptic mode” in which faith is a “being-on-the-road”, “discipleship”, a “resistance willing to suffer against powerful social prejudices”<sup>195</sup>. We shall consider further this concept of anamnesis in our section on memory, but here a word is due on what he means by stating it is the essence of the Jewish spirit. We noted earlier that Metz also describes the Jewish spirit as “the power of memory” and this ties in with his comments on anamnestic reason. Metz thus portrays the Jewish people presented to us in scripture as being decisively formed by memory. This memory is epistemological as it is a way of knowing that forms what he terms anti-knowledge. By this he means that it enables an alternative reasoning to the hegemony of the dominant way of knowing. For biblical Israel this dominant way of knowing which they were able to resist was the promise of fertility, security and prosperity offered by the foreign cultic idols of their more powerful neighbours.

However, Metz asserts that the anamnestic reason and culture of the Jewish spirit is not beguiled by these false promises. The God Israel worships is not a faceless Baal but is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Joseph; thus their understanding of who God is and their self-identity as a people is formed by recalling and retelling the narrative of God’s dealings with and revelation to his

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<sup>193</sup> Metz, *FF*, pp. 45 – 48.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45 – 47.

people. That Metz, as we shall note in detail in chapter 4, includes Job in this list of Patriarchs highlights the history of suffering that is part of the history of the Jewish people. This is therefore a reasoning and way of knowing that is not based on the myth of victors but includes the reality of suffering in its considerations. For us an anamnestic reason, in which we know that the God in whom we hope and to whom we cry in prayer is also the God of Job, carries with it a knowledge of the suffering of others that presents to us an alternative reasoning to the predominance and hegemony of modern technical and scientific reasoning. This alternative knowledge is anti-knowledge. We, therefore, like the people of Israel should not be beguiled by the powerful, by the victors in history. We recognise that the promise of scientific-technical reason to fix the problems of the world are but another myth that we should resist. The church operating with this anamnestic reason becomes a cognitive minority that in its willing resistance to the powers witnesses to the history of suffering, our hope for resurrection and the expectation of the imminent return of Christ. Given anamnestic reason forms an anti-knowledge that enables us to live differently and resists the powers, this form of reasoning is connected to the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2) that occurs in and is also the fruit of conversion. It is therefore integral to the issue of class treason we previously discussed.

As Metz writes through the nineteen-eighties into the early nineties, the importance of globalization to his thoughts increases particularly in relation to this category of solidarity. He argues:

It is only now, ... when people are becoming more present to each other as humanity - not only conceptually, but in their dependencies, in their

needs, and suffering – that the magnitude of the obligation contained in a proposition as seemingly self-evident as the equality of all people as God’s creatures, is made clear <sup>196</sup>.

The presence to each other he refers to is not local presence in which awareness of dependencies, needs and suffering has always existed for those with eyes to see. No the presence and resultant growing awareness of obligations he speaks of is the growing physical, commercial and cultural ties arising from our global interconnectedness. Asia is no longer merely a concept for most Westerners but is where we holiday and where our shoes, clothes and computers are made. Metz challenges us to consider our global connection, and reflect upon ‘with whom’, and ‘for what’, and thus consider how our interests impact upon the other and what our responsibilities are. However, to be aware, to know and to have the power to act are not identical. The former does not guarantee the latter. What are we to do with this growing awareness of global responsibilities? Metz brings this back to discipleship, to a solidaristic praxis in which we enter the “historical struggle for global solidarity with the disadvantaged and needy”<sup>197</sup>. This is the struggle for “all persons to be subjects” capable of agency<sup>198</sup>.

While Metz is clearly a thinker from ‘the left,’ it would be remiss to paint him as a socialist or quasi-Marxist. He states unequivocally that it “would not be permissible for Christians simply to copy” the socialist idea of an “international solidarity of the working classes”<sup>199</sup>. However, the language of class and class based analysis remains part of his critique of both society and the Church.

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<sup>196</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 225.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>199</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 213.



Indeed he provocatively suggests that the Church has its own class problem, “the contrast between the churches of the North and the South” that we must resolve<sup>200</sup>. We are sympathetic to the point he wishes to make within this statement given the Church should not simply mirror but transcend the world’s social divisions. However, we have concerns regarding such talk of class which we shall address below.

## Memory.

For Metz memory is inseparable from solidarity for as “dangerous memory,” it is “‘solidarity looking back’. It is a memorative solidarity with the dead and vanquished, which breaks the spell of history as a history of victors”<sup>201</sup>. In order to understand what this means we need to comment on his adoption of the category of anamnesis and how this informs his concept of memory. Our starting point shall be the expression of this developed in *GGG*.

Metz adopts, uses, and adapts the concept of *anamnesis*. He does so because he sees a connection between the “platonic theory of anamnesis” in which “rational knowledge” is grounded in “pre-conscious [*vorgewußter*] truth” and the Judeo-Christian emphasis on “history and freedom”<sup>202</sup>. He is therefore not evoking anamnesis in its common Greek usage as the word for “recollection” or “reminder” but appeals to the Platonic concept of latent a priori truth embedded in the human consciousness. Furthermore, while Metz strongly connects this remembering to the “specific memory” of the “*memoria*

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>201</sup> Metz, *GGG.*, p. 177.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

*Jesu Christi*” he does not draw attention to St. Paul’s use of the word *anamnesis* placed on the lips of Christ in the institution of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:24)<sup>203</sup>. We shall return to this Eucharistic use in a later chapter.

Returning to *anamnesis* as a concept with its roots in Platonism, this ancient philosophy taught that truth was pre-existent in the human soul and lay dormant in the human consciousness. Truth was therefore not something ‘learned’ but ‘remembered’. This was done via what is termed the ‘Socratic mode of inquiry’ or *maieutics*. As a mode of inquiry *maieutics* is a procedure of pedagogy based on the idea that the truth is latent in the human mind due to our innate reason given at birth. This truth is brought forth by the ‘teacher’ posing questions to the ‘student’ so as to awaken and cause him to ‘remember’ the truth already present in his or her ‘mind’. For Metz truth is preconscious, not in the same sense as Plato. The preconsciousness of *anamnesis* Metz advocates is “in the sense of being forgotten and therefore ‘re-remembered’ with the help of *maieutics* procedure”<sup>204</sup>. It is not pre-existent in the Platonic sense of something belonging to a pre-existent soul and therefore something we are born with. It may however be pre-existent as a tradition that has been forgotten, as communal wisdom we need to remember. Christian doctrine rightly rejects the concept of a pre-existent soul and therefore truth cannot be pre-existent for Christian theology in the same terms as Platonism. Thus rather than draw on a Platonic conception of preconsciousness Metz points to the “Thomistic doctrine of the a priori ‘light of reason,’ which according to *De Veritate* can disclose itself in *memoria*

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<sup>203</sup> Metz, *FHS*, pp. 184 – 5.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

knowledge” as an antecedent to that which he is proposing<sup>205</sup>. However, it is interesting to note that this maieutics method sits at odds with the primary method of ‘teaching’ in traditional Christian churches, that is the preaching of the word of God as a sermon. Metz is silent on how, or where, such pedagogy would take place in Christianity.

Metz links the concept of anamnesis with the decisive and central importance of memory and history in Christianity. In Christianity “its memories are related to a historically unique event” – the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ – “an event in which it believes that the eschatological redemption and liberation of human beings has irrevocably dawned”<sup>206</sup>. This Christianised anamnesis is distinct from its Platonic precursor in that it is not just a looking backwards but in “its eschatological orientation it becomes a recapitulatory ‘remembering looking forward’”<sup>207</sup>. Yet, in his later writings where everything is viewed in the light of Auschwitz, into the development of anamnesis from Plato to Christianity, an intermediary stage is introduced with a lasting efficacy. This is the Jewish spirit of memory which he links to Israel’s “capacity for God [*Gottfähigkeit*]” which manifests itself in a “particular type of poverty and inability: namely the inability to be consoled by myths and ideas”<sup>208</sup>. This inability and poverty he calls Israel’s “poverty of spirit”. He states: “This is precisely what I would call Israel’s poverty before God, or poverty of spirit”, as such memory is “an anamnestic culture” and

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<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>208</sup> Metz, *TT.*, p. 113.

something that can appear in the public sphere<sup>209</sup>. The link between memory and the spirit of poverty allows him to root his critique of bourgeois power in Israel's weakness, in her refusal to be comforted by the myths of more powerful surrounding cultures, but to find her consolation only in God. This link between Israel's suffering and Christian identity is at the heart of his second thesis and his assertion that Auschwitz is a "critical interrogation of one's own theology," so that we hear in Christ's cry of dereliction an echo of Israel's "eschatological landscape of cries"<sup>210</sup>. This public memory as a culture binds us in solidarity with the Jewish people, with all peoples who suffer, and shatters the illusion of the logic of evolution and endless progress. Metz comments, "in the light of Christian memory", (which post-Auschwitz is always a going forward "together with the victims of Auschwitz"; this is his second thesis on Auschwitz<sup>211</sup>):

It is clear that social power and political dominion are not simply to be taken for granted, but they continually have to justify themselves in the view of actual suffering ... The social and political power of the rich and the rulers must be open to the question of the extent to which it causes suffering<sup>212</sup>.

The concept of memory Metz develops is defined as "the memory of freedom that becomes a orientation to action as a memory of suffering"<sup>213</sup>. As such it has a narrative structure that leads to "critique a technology of history devoid of memory, as well as to new encounters with the tradition of *anamnesis*

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<sup>209</sup> Metz, *PG.*, p. 158, p. 131.

<sup>210</sup> Metz, in Ratzinger, Metz, Moltmann, Goodman-Thau, *The End of Time*, New York : Paulist Press, 2004 p. 27.

<sup>211</sup> Metz & Moltmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 13., p. 42. See Metz, *Facing the Jews*, *Ibid.*, pp. 41 – 45 for his detailed account of this second thesis. See also Metz, "The Church after Auschwitz", in *PG.*, pp. 124 – 127.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

and of Christian *memoria*”<sup>214</sup>. This comment reveals key characteristics about Metz’s category of narrative and its importance to memory and solidarity.

Metz does not propose a theory of narrative in which the significance of the narrative is reduced to an example of what has previously been worked out argumentatively in theology. Both have a place in theology as he notes: “There is a time for telling stories and a time for pondering arguments”<sup>215</sup>. Rather, he proposes a theory of narrative that affects “the structure of theology itself”<sup>216</sup>. Key in his thoughts regarding this is the issue of bringing together our “experience of reality in contradiction,” that is our suffering, our experience of loss and awareness of finitude, and the meaning of salvation in which these contradictions are reconciled “through God’s action in Jesus Christ”<sup>217</sup>. In bringing together this reality in a unity he is not doing so as “pure paradox” or dialectically, but in a way that allows us to give “expression to salvation in history – history that is always a history of suffering”<sup>218</sup>. This is important for it means that his category of memory which is sensitive to theodicy (an issue we shall discuss in detail in chapter 3), neither truncates a “discussion of salvation nor the contradictory experiences of life”<sup>219</sup>. The memory of freedom as a memory of suffering noted above is therefore not an exercise in paradox or dialectical sublation, but in narrative salvation and suffering are held in tension

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<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 191.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

allowing a “unity between doctrine and life”<sup>220</sup>. In the telling of what he terms “dangerous stories, stories in search of freedom,” hope is not deferred but is put forth and made present through the practical effect of the narrative<sup>221</sup>. This practical effect finds its efficaciousness in the relation between narrative and sacrament. Metz, drawing upon Martin Buber’s observations on aspects of narrative, comments that narrative has the character of “sacrament as a salvific sign”<sup>222</sup>. This sign is characterised by Metz as a “‘speech act’ in which the unity of narrative as an efficacious word and the practical effect is expressed in the same speech process”<sup>223</sup>. Narrative is therefore not a means by which truth that is subsequently applied is communicated, but in the telling of the story its “critical-liberating power” is unleashed in such a way that the narrator and the listener are both, albeit in a differentiated way, liberated<sup>224</sup>. As a community that narrates the memory of the life, “passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus” we encounter the dangerous-liberating memory, or story, of Jesus in which our “faith in the redemption of history” becomes practical as we become “doers of the word”<sup>225</sup>.

With this in mind we now ask what Metz means when he talks of the *memory of freedom*. To understand this we must return to his thoughts on the errors of the Enlightenment in adopting abstract categories in its understanding

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<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p. 201.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p.194.

of history that comes to be rendered as a “history of domination”<sup>226</sup>. The subjugation principle we encountered above has led enlightenment man and woman to pursue a project of domination. But these subjects, instead of experiencing the freedom the Enlightenment promised, now find themselves dominated and subject to impersonal forces, be that ‘the markets’ or technology. This is primarily because practical and critical reason has itself become dominated by the abstract and has thus become banal. Memory as the memory of freedom seeks to be “immanent to critical reason”<sup>227</sup>. As such it is a specific memory of freedom in contrast to the “indeterminate”, “contrary” and arbitrary ways that freedom is frequently used in modernity. This specific memory of freedom arises from “those traditions in which the interests of freedom arose,” traditions that as “narrated histories of freedom – are not the object, but rather the presupposition of any critical reconstruction of history by argumentative reason”<sup>228</sup>. By narrated histories of freedom Metz conceives of the memory of freedom primarily as a “memory of suffering (*memoria passionis*),” and specifically the memory of Jesus<sup>229</sup>. In taking this form the memory of freedom counterposes any idealistic history of the victors that would seek to sublimate the history of the victims. This *memoria passionis* is recalled in ‘dangerous stories’ that in critical-liberating efficacy can “neither be demonstrated nor reconstructed a priori” but, as we noted above in considering narrative, hold in unity contradiction and salvation<sup>230</sup>. Memory is therefore not the collation of historical

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* p. 179.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

information but given the “cognitive primacy of narrated memory,” it is opposed to history as information<sup>231</sup>. These ‘dangerous stories’ as we have already noted are elsewhere called by Metz dangerous memory and find their critical-liberating impulse from the dangerous memory of Jesus, dangerous because it “harries the past and problematizes it, ...remembers the past in terms of a future that is still outstanding”<sup>232</sup>. This eschatological memory, as the dangerous memory or stories of Jesus, “destabilizes” and causes us to question those things in our present that we take for granted. It forbids us to shrug our shoulders in resignation and sigh, ‘That’s just the way things are’.

Memory as the memory of suffering intensifies in Metz’s later writings, and this is in no small measure due to the intensification of twin concerns developing in his thought - the poor church of Latin America and the horror of Auschwitz. With this intensification there is the danger that this *memoria passionis* drifts from its Christological moorings and becomes the *memoria passionis* of Auschwitz, or of the poor of Latin America. His emphasis on Matthew 25 perhaps shows an awareness on his part of this potential problem, in that this passage provides a theological link between the encounter of suffering in human subjects and the person of Christ. We must never lose sight of this link and as we develop his thoughts in chapter eight on being a Eucharistic community our proposal is that faithful and obedient keeping of the Lord’s table is an important aspect in maintaining this link. A major task of this memory of suffering is to fire the political imagination anew so as to birth a new politics. If

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<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.



this is to happen then memory must not just function as a resource from which to critique the present but it must connect and bolster Christian hope. That our remembrance is of Christ and of his incarnation, passion and resurrection means that our memory of suffering is always a hopeful remembering; it is a remembering of what is to come as well as what has passed.

One reason his category of memory intensifies is as a result of a growing consciousness of the dangers posed to political life by the growing dominance of technological and economic processes. This not only leads to a “paralysis of human spontaneity” but leads to a banality, given this “economico-technical structuralism” reduces politics to planning and the struggle to discern the common good is reduced to an automated process<sup>233</sup>. Banal is used here in its Arendtian sense of an unthinking compliance with and following of structures and processes. A new politics is required in which economics and technology are not bypassed – for this would be impossible – but in which political imagination is able to reassert itself as imagination “from below of freedom and responsibility” which means a reconnection of politics and morals<sup>234</sup>. A political imagination capable of this transformation arises and is sustained by this memory of suffering which confronts the anonymous automated processes of technology and economics with an alternative vision of what development and progress means.

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<sup>233</sup> Metz, *FF*, p. 4.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Memory must not be a “false consciousness of our past and an opiate for our present”<sup>235</sup>. This false consciousness is a nostalgic rose tinted memory of the past that assuages our “present disappointments” but seems to make no demands upon us for change. The memory Metz invokes makes “demands on us”<sup>236</sup>. These memories are dangerous primarily for their future content. While he does not name him, Metz approvingly quotes Herbert Marcuse:

Remembrance of the past can allow *dangerous insights* to emerge, and society as it is established would seem to fear the subversive contents of this memory<sup>237</sup>.

The memory of the past stirs us from an excessively optimistic assessment regarding the present so we see aright and can discern its banality and where its anonymous forces tyrannise our subjecthood. Dangerous memories illuminate the present allowing us to discern how we should live, (Eph. 5:13 – 14). Dangerous memories are dangerous to the status quo, to what Metz terms “technico-pragmatic reason”<sup>238</sup>.

Is to talk of Bourgeois Christianity a theological misnomer?

Having outlined Metz’s political theology with particular attention to solidarity and memory we now return to his concept of the Bourgeois, and his use of this term. Comment and analysis of Metz’s critique of the bourgeois subject, bourgeois culture, bourgeois religion, and bourgeois Christianity by others, e.g. Chopp, Martinez, and Ashley, lacks an important element, that is

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8. Italics added for emphasis. See also Marcuse, Herbert, *One Dimensional Man (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, London : Routledge, 1964, 1991, p. 101.

<sup>238</sup> Metz, *FF*, p. 8.

any questioning of the use of the term itself. So, we must ask if the term bourgeois and its derivatives are appropriate in theological discourse. Secondly, we must also ask: 'What does Metz mean by bourgeois?' J.H. Yoder complained that the word revolution had "passed through so many tongues and pens, that most of its meaning has worn off"<sup>239</sup>. We might say something similar regarding the term bourgeois, and thus must enquire as to who is included or excluded by his use of this term. In asking this question we should also consider whether his analysis and characterization of bourgeois life, society, and religion is a caricature bearing little resemblance to reality, or does it disclose something truthful about late twentieth and early twenty-first century life in 'Western society'?

The term bourgeois seems to have fallen out of fashion and appears passé and outmoded in contemporary discussions. This is indicated in its exclusion from Bennett, Grossberg, and Morris's reworking of Raymond Williams *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* in their 'new' and 'revised' vocabulary of culture and society<sup>240</sup>. One of their aims was to delete from their volume "those of Williams' keywords that ...have not sustained their importance in terms of the ways people represent their experiences and give meaning to their perceptions of a changing world"<sup>241</sup>. It seems bourgeois is one such term as it is not given an entry as it was in Williams' edition, but is merely

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<sup>239</sup> Yoder, J.H., *The Original Revolution*, Pennsylvania : Herald Press, 1971, 2003, p. 14.

<sup>240</sup> Bennett, Tony, Grossberg, Lawrence, Morris, Meaghan (Eds.), *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

noted in regard to its relationship to citizenship<sup>242</sup>. This outmoding of bourgeois, this loss of vocabulary and familiarity with the term, means that if we are to understand Metz we should take a little time to investigate what is meant by it.

The term is indelibly associated with Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) and thus with the issue of class struggle. It is this introduction of the vocabulary of class struggle that we consider problematic for theology for reasons we shall detail below. Iring Fetscher in charting the historical and political semantics of the term notes that it was “Marxism which has developed a precise definition of the bourgeoisie” - that is he or she is a capitalist, “a person who, by virtue of ownership of means of production on a considerable scale, lives off the organisation and exploitation of the labour power of others and manages his resources in a capitalistic way”<sup>243</sup>.

The link between Marx and the term bourgeoisie unalterably, at least in the popular imagination, ties it to the Marxist idiom of class as class struggle, as “two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat”<sup>244</sup>. To understand class in this idiom is to narrowly understand it as an economic category intrinsically related to the division of labour, and the ownership of property, and thus the means of production. Under

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *The Communist Manifesto*, London : Penguin Books, 1848, 2004, p. 3.

this Marxist paradigm the “relationship between classes is always exploitative”<sup>245</sup>.

It is our opinion that while there are elements of this Marxist use of bourgeoisie in Metz he employs the terms in a way that discloses reliance upon an older tradition, that of the German *Bürger*. The *Bürger* shared not only a linguistic but legal and cultural similarities with the *burgess* of Scottish burghs, and English boroughs, as well as the French *citoyens* who after “revolutionary abolition of the old hierarchical society” would be “described as a bourgeois class”<sup>246</sup>. In this older tradition what is conceptually and practically to the fore is that the *bürgerlicher* is that person who has a certain legal status and privileges within a legal corporate entity be that ‘Free Cities’ in Germany or Royal, regal, barony or parliamentary burgh towns in Scotland. From this legal meaning, notwithstanding certain national differences, there developed common social, moral, religious and cultural attitudes across Europe that were associated with this class. The antonym of the bourgeoisie in this tradition is not the Proletariat, but the bonded country dweller, who lacked the legal and political status of the *bürgerlicher*. Within this tradition ‘class’ or social stratification is not merely economic. A bonded country dweller may have economic power the *bürgerlicher* does not. What distinguishes the two classes is legal status, is being a citizen, along with other markers that identified one as belonging to this group such as social attitudes, codes of dress or habits of taste. It was Weber and his theory of social stratification who married the ‘badges’ symbolic of one’s social and legal

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<sup>245</sup> Gorringe, Timothy, *Capital and the Kingdom*, Maryknoll : Orbis Books, 1994, p. 44.

<sup>246</sup> Fetscher, Iring, *The ‘Bourgeoisie’ (Bürgertum, Middle Class)*, in Metz, J.B. (Ed.), *Christianity and the Bourgeoisie*, Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1979, p. 5.

status with one's economic standing. Thus while class is understood differently from its economically based antagonistic Marxian form, the traditional meaning of bourgeoisie or Weberian analysis still divides society in terms of class. This understanding of bourgeoisie is apparent in Metz's contrast of the bourgeois subject and those who experience non-identity. The bourgeoisie has legal rights and a degree of political agency in contrast to those who experience non-identity. Thus, while economic factors are always involved, for Metz the primary characteristic of the bourgeoisie is the freedom and ability to act that dialectically deprives others of agency.

An issue for Christian theology with 'class' is that it not only sees the stratification of differing peoples in a society in terms of opposition, but by invoking the language of struggle (in the case of Marx's revolution) distrust and violence are inherent in this view. It may on one level be right in stating that the bourgeois subjugate and exploit the working class. It may also be right that the effects of social stratification on people's life chances are that those from the lower classes will die younger, and will be more susceptible to major types of mental disorder and physical illness. Thus, notwithstanding differences in capacity, strength, health and wellbeing that occur naturally, external socio-economic factors also play a significant role in differences in health and life opportunities. External factors beyond an individual's control may impinge upon a person's natural capacities and inhibit him or her reaching their potential. External factors may consign very able and capable people to a life of poverty and suffering. And here we reach the crux of the matter: how does the category of class, which seeks to distinguish between people, help form solidarities that

are beneficial to those who suffer? Can solidarity be formed across ‘the class divide’?

The Marxist vision of a class-less society was to be achieved by a reversal or inversion of the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Rather than deal with the issue of inequality at a deeper level the phenomenological analysis of class-theory and its praxis merely inverts the subjugation and exploitation of one class for another. The language of ‘re-distribution’, or ‘re-appropriation’, is but metonymy for the inversion of the exploitation of the poor by the bourgeoisie. In other words, exploitation and subjugation remain, all that has changed is the subject of this action, the boot is merely on the other foot and thus a latent hostility remains. Inequalities and hostilities, between peoples within a society, are not dissolved by merely lifting them out of the economic-social situation in which they find themselves. Such an approach- i.e. dissolving inequality via economic-social means – cannot resolve deeper issues such as our finitude and the finitude of those resources that surround us, the divergence and distribution of human abilities, and human worth based on our status as creatures made in God’s image. Thus inequality, suffering, the self-alienations of Marxism, cannot be reduced to social, political, economic, and technological expectations.

The Marxist analysis of history as class-struggle gives class a greater solidity and permanence than it can really claim. Belief in class differences becomes static and in one sense self fulfilling. If history is the struggle between two great classes then rather than overcoming the differences of class this

analysis locks the opposing camps in an ineradicable struggle. Belief in class differences, then, can itself become an ideology that conceals real interests and movements. We require a social analysis that includes but also goes beyond economic concerns to expose ideas, interests and false consciousness that are stubborn and resistant to change.

The Christian vision for social relations, while diverse, is one in which social antinomies are reconciled, one in which parties who were hostile to each other are at peace. St. Paul links his instruction to “regard no one from a human point of view” (2 Cor. 5:16) to the new reality inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection. He states: “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation,” (v. 17) a new creation in which we are not only reconciled to God, but also to each other (v. 18 – 20). The social and political implication of this is that any social definition of who we are based on class, capacity, or status does, and should not be, primary to our self-understanding, nor society’s understanding of itself. The analysis of social stratification, whether it is Marxist, Weberian, or based on a concept of ‘the natural’, are as we have noted phenomenological. The gospel calls our attention to the deeper reality of ‘new creation’, so “we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen” (2 Cor. 4:18). It is in the light and knowledge of this reality that St. Paul says “[T]here is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:18). Thus while we are called to respond in Christian love to reality as it confronts us (1 John 3:17), this is undergirded by our knowledge that the person in need whom we help is not one of ‘them’ but one-with-us. We therefore object to Metz’s adoption of the term bourgeois as it



obscures this deeper reality by overlaying it with an inherently divisive class analysis, and cannot be dissociated from perpetuating the antimonies between the wealthy and the poor, and those of various 'standing' in the continuum in between.

Having established that the term bourgeois is not appropriate as a theological category or term, should we then reject Metz's analysis whole-scale? The simple answer is no, for to do so would be to lose the valuable insights offered to us by Metz's reading of the human condition in late twentieth century 'Western' societies.

It seems to us that we can avoid the issues we have just raised associated with the term bourgeois by substituting the term 'Enlightenment Man' for 'bourgeois man', and Western culture and society for bourgeois culture and society. That Metz did not do so is indicative of the influence of the intellectual and theological milieu of which he was part. He perhaps also avoided the term 'Enlightenment Man' as this is exactly who he wants to see emerge from the 'false' enlightenment of occidental rationality. For Metz Enlightenment Man, properly so, is the man and woman who is freed from the bondage of the principle of subjugation and principle of exchange to live in freedom in solidarity with the suffering. This issue of nuance and terminology can be overcome by designating what Metz rejects – bourgeois man dominated by occidental rationality – as Enlightenment Man, and what he proposes as redeemed-Enlightenment Man. This way of phrasing the issue keeps the heart of Metz's teaching that what is required is a conversion, a work that ultimately can only be

accomplished by a following of Jesus, by the work of the Spirit of God. This conversion impacts upon political life and is not just a matter of ‘interior’ piety. It “can only be achieved together with others”<sup>247</sup>.

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<sup>247</sup> Metz, *EC*, p. 72.

## Chapter 3.

### Eschewing Theodicy?

Sarah Pinnock includes Metz in a group of “continental thinkers who eschew theodicy”; but Metz persists in using the word<sup>248</sup>. The question therefore arises as to whether Metz intends to eschew theodicy or if he is more interested in remoulding theodicy, reconnecting it with a biblical tradition found in Job, the Psalms and the cry of Christ from the cross, rather than eschewing theodicy.

The word ‘theodicy’ is derived from two Greek words, *theos* (God) and *dikē* (judgement, justice). As a philosophical and a theological endeavour it is principally concerned with the rational justification of God’s goodness confronted by the reality of evil present in our world. In seeking to undertake this endeavour theodacists normally seek to reconcile not only God’s goodness with the existence of evil, but also his omnipotence and omniscience. While the term theodicy is rightly associated with G.W. Leibniz’s 1710 essays published under that name, the conundrum raised by the proposition of a good God who is all powerful and the existence of evil was the subject of philosophical and theological enquiry long before Leibniz. Before Leibniz coined the term theodicy, consideration of the questions it asks was generally approached as the problem of evil, with Epicurus (341 – 270 BC) credited as the first thinker to formulate this problem<sup>249</sup>. Indeed this problem has been discussed through the ages by such

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<sup>248</sup> Pinnock, Sarah K., *Beyond Theodicy*, New York : SUNY Press, 2002, p. 7.

<sup>249</sup> Surin, Kenneth, *Theology and the Problem of Evil*, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1986., p.1.

prominent thinkers as Philo, Plotinus, Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas<sup>250</sup>. Our aim in this chapter is to consider the issue of theodicy and examine and critique Metz's approach to this subject given it plays a central part in his political theology. To engage with Metz's thoughts on theodicy necessitates our engagement with him on his considerations of Auschwitz, the Jewish people and Israel, as they are integral to his approach regarding theodicy.

For Metz the "theodicy question" is "speech about God as a cry for the salvation of others, of those who suffer unjustly, the victims and the vanquished in our society"<sup>251</sup>. This concern for others, rather than an existential angst or pity about one's own condition, is why his theodicy is political. As we noted in our previous chapter Metz's is a political theology with a focus upon liberation and his consideration of theodicy feeds into this concern. We shall comment further on liberation later. His theodicy is not a "a late and defiant attempt by theology to justify God in the face of evil experienced, and the face of suffering and evil in the world," but its concern is for the person who suffers<sup>252</sup>. His aim is therefore not the traditional aim of theodicy, the reconciliation of the problem of a good, caring and powerful God with the existence of evil in our world. He states emphatically, "theology ...cannot solve the theodicy question"<sup>253</sup>. Rather, in hearing the "cry of the crucified" as well as the message of the resurrection we, like Christ, direct our questioning and crying out to God<sup>254</sup>. We shall say more about Metz's use of Christ's cry in the next chapter. Here, however, we note that

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> Metz, *TT*, p. 104.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

in drawing attention to Christ's cry Metz not only calls upon us to cry out to God, but also to await our vindication by God in his gracious act.

In stating that the problem of theodicy cannot be solved Metz turns his attention away from a human justification of God to God's vindication of himself. This is not incidental to his concern for the vindication of subjects who presently or historically suffer, as this vindication is depended upon and intertwined with God's vindication of himself, given we who suffer and await vindication are 'in Christ'. He writes: "God himself in his day will justify himself in the face of this history of suffering"<sup>255</sup>. Our present consolation in the face of suffering is not in the belief in myths, an issue we shall consider shortly, but our consolation is in a believing faith in a God who justifies both the living and the dead (Rom. 8).

Metz's approach to theodicy as speech about God seeks to engage with the "basic principles of the biblical experience of God," basic principles that he terms the Israelite-biblical paradigm<sup>256</sup>. This paradigm has three features, two of which we met in our previous chapter: memory and poverty of spirit. The third feature is what he calls a "mysticism of suffering in God" (*Mystik des Leidens an Gott*) that we shall explore in depth in our next chapter<sup>257</sup>. These three features are not independent of each other but mutually support and inform the other. Our memory and suffering are expressed in a mysticism of suffering unto God.

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<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Metz remarks that this mysticism is “found particularly in Israel’s prayer traditions: in particular the Psalms, in Job, in Lamentations, and last but not least in many passages in the prophetic books”<sup>258</sup>. The connection of this mysticism to, in particular, the Psalms and Job along with the connection he makes between Job and Christ’s cry, establishes Metz’s theodicy as a return to a biblical rather than philosophical tradition of theodicy. Here we shall explore issues surrounding Metz’s focus on Auschwitz and how this links with the importance he places on biblical-Israel.

Auschwitz as a grotesque magnification of all the sufferings of the Jewish people through history shifts talk of suffering from the realm of the abstract, of talk of suffering in general terms, to the concrete, *this* suffering of *these* people. In concretising suffering by naming a specific event Metz challenges us not to consider suffering as a problem of metaphysics but as an issue of practical reason and therefore political theology. Metz unequivocally states: “After Auschwitz every theological ‘profundity’ which is unrelated to people and their concrete situations must cease to exist”<sup>259</sup>. In his view we can only go beyond Auschwitz together with the victims of Auschwitz. The question, however, arises as to why Metz has this focus on Auschwitz and the Jewish people. If the issue is merely ‘where is God?’ or ‘why did God not intervene?’ then Metz may have addressed such questions by considering the horrors of WWI or the Armenian genocide of 1915 and the preceding pogroms against the mainly Christian Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire from 1894. This genocide, against a

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<sup>258</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 66.

<sup>259</sup> Metz, *EC*, p. 22.

predominantly Christian population, included the massacre of whole towns and villages as well as the forced deportation to 'relocation centres' in an attempt to remove a people from their homeland and wipe away the tangible evidence of their "three thousand years of material and spiritual culture"<sup>260</sup>. That the number of men, women and children who died in this genocide is much less than the Holocaust is immaterial. Like the Nazi programme of extermination this was an organised and concerted effort to kill an entire people.

Metz does not directly answer our question as to why he focuses on the history of suffering of the Jewish people epitomised by Auschwitz rather than the history of suffering of Christian minorities like the Armenians. Our answer to why this is the case is therefore conjecture; however this is not unfounded supposition but is based on our detailed reading of Metz.

It is our opinion that there is not one overriding reason for Metz's focus but a cluster of reasons that together become significant. Firstly, there are personal reasons why this is a pressing issue for Metz. He is German and writes at a time of national soul searching. His own mother told him that during the Nazi period she neither heard nor knew anything about the Nazi death camps, a remarkable admission given Flossenbürg was a mere fifty kilometres from the family home<sup>261</sup>. His attention on Auschwitz is therefore not merely to rebut those "who deny this horror" but also to ask how and why the German people could

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<sup>260</sup> Hovannisian, Richard G., *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, Michigan : Wayne State University, 1999, p. 13.

<sup>261</sup> Metz, *HAH*, pp. 14-5.

have been ignorant of this happening and how and why those who were not ignorant were either complicit or active in their hatred and violence towards the Jews.

This personal and collective soul-searching finds a particular expression as a question asked by the church and Christian theology: “How and why could this happen in a Christian nation?” Werner Jeanrond notes that following the Nazi period:

Christian theologians have been faced with two critical questions: first, why was there no theology of resistance that could have motivated more members of the Christian churches actively to oppose the ideological theory and totalitarian praxis of the Nazi regime? And second, how, if at all, can theology continue to speak of a loving God after Auschwitz?<sup>262</sup>

Metz’s critique of bourgeois culture and bourgeois religion marks his engagement with the first issue Jeanrond identifies. An important issue in Metz’s critique of the bourgeois subject is their treatment of ‘the other’. He writes that the political theology he is developing “strives ...for a culture of the acknowledgement of the other as other”<sup>263</sup>. The totalitarian ideology of National Socialism sought to eradicate all alterity, with the eradication of the Jewish people in particular a prime objective of this ideology. If Metz had engaged with the question of theodicy by considering the Armenian genocide then his critique of German bourgeois self-identity would not have been such an integral part of his argument or a direct concern. Moreover, while the issues of identity and alterity would have been part of an engagement with the Armenian genocide it

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<sup>262</sup> Jeanrond, *Op. cit.*, pp. 193 – 4.

<sup>263</sup> Metz, *PG.*, p. 27



would have been very different in the issues raised and engaged with. In approaching the issue of identity and alterity by considering Auschwitz, Metz is able to focus upon questions around the relationship of the 'Christian subject' to 'the other' and in particular the relation of the Christian and the Jew.

Related to our comments above is Metz's recurring theme of interruption. By addressing the questions Auschwitz poses, "theology's stream of ideas" is interrupted<sup>264</sup>. This interruption is not merely the question, "Can we talk of a loving God after Auschwitz?" This question is raised by the recurring catastrophes, natural and anthropological or an admixture of both in their causes, that form the history of suffering. Rather, similar to our argument above, by concentrating on an event that took place in a country significantly shaped by and influenced by Christian teaching he allows Auschwitz to confront and interrupt our Christian self-understanding and ask, "How could we as followers of Christ have allowed or even participated in such actions?"

While in Metz's approach to theodicy the question, "[W]hy God, suffering? Why sin? Why have you made no provision for evil?" is never silenced, the "*Theodizeefrage*" primarily takes the form "*Wo bleibt Gott?*"<sup>265</sup>. In Metz this phrase is never simply the question "Where is God?" but more expressively "Where has God got to?" or "What has happened to God?"<sup>266</sup>. Metz is therefore pushing for renewed reflection and consideration within the framework of a

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<sup>264</sup> Metz, *HAH*, p. 13.

<sup>265</sup> Metz, *PG.*, p. 5. *Ibid.*, *TT*, p. 104, 107.

<sup>266</sup> What is God waiting for? Is J. Matthew Ashley's translation (see *PG.*, p. 58), whereas what has happened to God is my translation of *Wo bleibt Gott*.

political theology, which means theology that is attentive to its socio-historical context and that is outworked as praxis, of the character of God.

Metz's engagement with theodicy is an integral part of his response to the Enlightenment and as such a rejection of the neo-Hegelian doctrine of continual progress. Of particular concern to Metz is the meta-narrative of Hegelian Idealism. Here specific concrete instances of suffering are abstracted in a grand historical scheme and sublated into history's positive realization of the *Geist* within history. If Hegelian Idealism is the backdrop to which Metz reacts then his theme of apocalypse brings into the foreground not just the theme of history but of time. In considering the subject of time within modernity Darwin and Nietzsche take on an important role in Metz's thought. He critiques Darwin's evolutionary logic, with its great time spans in which evolution can take place, because of its link with notions of endless progress. This evolutionary logic coheres with Marx's material view of reality to become "evolutionistic materialism"<sup>267</sup>. This leads to a view of history as the "empty finitude of timeless time" in which the suffering of the individual, and the individual qua subject, is lost to view<sup>268</sup>. This evolutionistic time has no end and its boundless nature neuters Christian eschatology and apocalypticism, reducing the latter to speculation about the world's end and the former to mere ethics and a reductionist preoccupation with the concerns of the individual and individual death. Metz counters this hegemony of timelessness and its concomitant concept

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<sup>267</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 82.

<sup>268</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 53.

– infinite progress – with his apocalyptic categories of interruption and dangerous memory.

It is within this paradigm of unbounded time that Metz believes a “new mythology” which has driven the European Enlightenment has arisen<sup>269</sup>. The progenitor, the head “prophet” of this “new enthusiasm for myths” is, according to Metz, Nietzsche<sup>270</sup>. Metz’s account of modernity argues that for all its technological advances and reliance upon empirical science it has failed to demythologise modern man; people are still reliant upon myth to give meaning to existence. In this respect we might say that Metz follows Nietzsche, especially early Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music (BT)*. However, in his major works after *BT*, Nietzsche’s primary concern is the liberation of the subject from the impediments to human development posed by religion. For Nietzsche, “God is dead” but his shadow in the form of religious belief may yet be cast for a millennia, therefore “we must still defeat the shadow as well”<sup>271</sup>.

Metz’s innovation in interpreting Nietzsche is to turn the latter’s critique of modernity and myth on its head and claim this is now the *condition sine qua non* of modernity. Modernity has become “an age of religion without God” in which the freedom of subjects to act is a freedom without recourse to a transcendent authority. However, the proclamation of “God is dead” leads inevitably to the death of the subject. If there are no subjects there are no human

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<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72, 75.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>271</sup> Nietzsche, F., *The Gay Science*, §108. See also *The Gay Science* §125 and §343.

actors who can realise the freedom modernity and Nietzsche proclaimed. Within this thought “there are no subjects only self-referential systems,” no “historical freedom” only the “endless indifferent evolution”<sup>272</sup>. Thus, history and its subjects are condemned to Nietzsche’s “eternal hourglass of existence” being “turned over again and again” in what has been termed the “eternal return of the same”<sup>273</sup>. We are trapped in a cycle of passing away and becoming in which our attempt to find our way “out of the finite nothing of the self-willing ego back into the eternal whole of Being” ends in a belief that we are God “around whom everything else becomes world”<sup>274</sup>. With this comes the end not only of God and the subject, but arising from this, the collapse of history “into an anonymous temporally unbounded evolution that wills and seeks nothing except evolution”<sup>275</sup>. There is thus the loss of God, persons, and “historical freedom” in which concepts such as justice; charity, compassion, and human and political agency are lost. We are therefore left to the ravages of “the intergalactic cold of an endless indifferent evolution” in which suffering is part of the fabric of the universe and we are powerless to effect change<sup>276</sup>.

For Metz “this time-myth has driven the processes of the European Enlightenment into those contradictions spoken of by the ‘Dialectic of Enlightenment’”<sup>277</sup>. According to Metz, in championing the cause of reason and

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<sup>272</sup> Metz, *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>273</sup> Nietzsche, *Op. cit.*, §341, p. 194.

<sup>274</sup> Löwith, Karl, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (Trans. J. Harvey Lomax), Berkley : University of California, 1997, p. 10.

<sup>275</sup> Metz, *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75. Dialectic of Enlightenment is of course Adorno's and Horkheimer's seminal work.

dismissing myth, the Enlightenment itself dialectically “reverts to mythology”<sup>278</sup>. This acceptance of new mythologies and in particular the myths of infinite progress and endless time, are manifestations of a new immaturity. We shall comment further on this immaturity in chapter 4 and its link to Immanuel Kant. Here it is sufficient to note with Horkheimer and Adorno that there is a “destructive side of progress” given the dialectic of enlightenment is the “vehicle of both progress and regression,” the truth and untruth [*verum index sui et falsi*], the master and yet slave of technology<sup>279</sup>.

The question arises as to why Darwin and Nietzsche are important to Metz’s thoughts on theodicy. In critiquing the concept of evolutionistic-timeless time and Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence of the same, Metz returns to a theme we encountered in our previous chapter, the liberation of persons from a position of non-identity to that of subjects. Given, according to his view, the form the Enlightenment has taken is an originator of such non-identity, his thoughts on theodicy form part of his political thought in which liberation from conditions of oppression and non-identity is key. His theodicy as a critique of modernity, and an enlightenment and theology that loses sight of persons as subjects in their historical particularities, contributes to this concern for liberation.

In this task Metz draws upon the resources of the Enlightenment itself by employing the tools of Kantian practical reason. He states:

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<sup>278</sup> Horkheimer, Max & Adorno, Theodor W., *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Trans. Edmund Jephcott), Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2002, p. xviii.

<sup>279</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno, *Ibid.*, p. xvi., p. 27.

I shifted from the transcendental Kant and from Heidegger to the Kant of the primacy of practical reason (turning once again to the theme of Enlightenment). I did that guided by the suspicion that the German philosophies upon which the transcendental paradigm was built – Idealism and Existentialism – had only overcome the Enlightenment speculatively without really having passed through it<sup>280</sup>.

That Metz turns from the transcendental Kant of the first Critique to the Kant of the primacy of practical reason is instructive, for as we consider his remoulding of theodicy we find in Kant a philosophical precedent to Metz's approach. Before considering Kant's theodicy we must first comment upon Metz's understanding of practical reason.

Metz's turn to practical reason is not an uncritical embrace of Kant of the second Critique. Metz's form of practical reason is one in which history "as a framework of tradition that norms action" is always "immanent to reason becoming practical through liberating critique"<sup>281</sup>. This represents a significant departure from Kant's practical reason in which action is "in accordance with that maxim through which you can will at the same time that it become a universal law"<sup>282</sup>. Metz considers this categorical imperative to be "neither simply socially innocent nor politically neutral"<sup>283</sup>. Differentiating between moral and social praxis under the guidance of history, and specifically memory, allows us to recognise that morality is not maturity (*Mündigkeit*) in Kant's terms. Kant contrasted maturity (*Mündigkeit*) with immaturity (*Unmündigkeit*) and in answering his question 'What is Enlightenment?' famously stated: „*Aufklärung ist*

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<sup>280</sup> Metz, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>281</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 177.

<sup>282</sup> Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Trans and Ed. Allen Wood), New Haven : Yale University Press, 2002, AK 4:421.

<sup>283</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 64.

*der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit*<sup>284</sup>. For Kant, to be enlightened is to be capable of rectitudinous living and to be immature is to exhibit the “inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another”<sup>285</sup>. Conversely, maturity is “to make *public use* of one’s reason in all matters”, it is the going public of his *Metaphysics of Morals*<sup>286</sup>. Metz objects to this given the importance he has placed on authority and tradition. This transfer, under Kant, of authority to the reason of the mature is one of the false turns the Enlightenment made and is nothing other than the empowerment of the bourgeois subject and bourgeois society. It is therefore, according to Metz, the adoption of a wrong (calculating, technical) reason and a false freedom that has led to a counterfeit enlightenment in which a new form of immaturity has flourished. Metz in stating, “Are there not in our enlightened Europe more symptoms of a second immaturity,” subtly critiques Kant’s technical-calculating reason and reminds us of his earlier comments on tradition and authority<sup>287</sup>. Metz continues his critique of Kant by stating, “there is a kind of immaturity (*Unmündigkeit*), a powerlessness and an oppressed life that is not due to simply the moral weakness of those who are immature”, but is a “socially conditioned immaturity” that in particular arises from conditions of poverty and suffering<sup>288</sup>. As we shall discover, for Metz, the universal that gives the *ought* of practical reason its imperative is not an internal *a priori* moral code but suffering.

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<sup>284</sup> Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity.

<sup>285</sup> Kant, Immanuel, *An Answer to the Question: “What is Enlightenment”* in Reiss, H.S. (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1970, 2008, p. 54. (Italics original to quote).

<sup>286</sup> Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>287</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 169.

<sup>288</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 64.

To arrive at Metz's concept of the universality of suffering it is worth considering Kant's theodicy as this leads us to consider the problem of history and the need for mediatory concepts. This in turn leads us to the universality of suffering.

Kant's treatment of theodicy is found in his essay *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee*. Like Metz, Kant rejects the use of what he terms "presumptuous reason" in approaching the issue of theodicy. Theodicies based on this reasoning have failed to do that which they promise: "namely the vindication of the moral wisdom ...against the doubts raised against it on the basis of what the experience of this world teaches"<sup>289</sup>. Yet what we know from this world, our "interpretation of nature insofar as God announces his will through it," is of great importance for it is from this that we can develop 'authentic theodicy'<sup>290</sup>. This authentic theodicy is founded, like Metz's, upon "an efficacious practical reason"<sup>291</sup>.

Kant draws upon the biblical story of Job as an allegorical expression of authentic theodicy. As with Metz, in Kant Job demonstrates the appropriate response to theodicy. This is his "sincerity of heart" which stands in contrast to his comforters who apply speculative or doctrinal theodicy to his situation. This

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<sup>289</sup> Kant, *On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trails in Theodicy [1791]*, in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and other writings* (Trans and Ed., Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni), Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1988, 8:263.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*



may seem rather un-Kantian given he disbars emotion or intuition from moral reasoning. Nevertheless, Kant is not advocating a form of emotivism. Sincerity of heart is synonymous for his 'moral law within'. It is on this point Metz and Kant substantively differ. Kant insists that the moral actor must not be influenced by empirical data but from imperatives that are prior to experience<sup>292</sup>. The debarring of empirical data means Kant's agent is unaware his or her actions may dialectically place others in circumstances of poverty and suffering and thus rob them of agency. For Metz, the imperative *ought* is accompanied by the memory of God's liberation of his suffering people from Egypt. Practical reason therefore has a bias towards the liberation of those who suffer. We therefore not only ask what we *ought* to do, but for whom and in whose interest?

There is concern that Kant's conception of practical reason, with its autonomous will, reduces the scope for God's agency within history. Given God wills "exclusively what reason requires", reason becomes God's proxy in history, with the consequence that not only is God's will subservient to human rationality, but that God qua God is absent from history<sup>293</sup>. As we shall see from our next chapter this theme of absence is important in Metz's project. This absence may provide fertile ground for an atheistic humanism, but it also supports a view where responsibility for outworking God's purposes within history falls squarely on human agency. While it is undoubtedly right that God outworks his purposes through human agency it cannot exclusively be so. This

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<sup>292</sup> Kant, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996, 4:408.

<sup>293</sup> Hare, John E. *The Moral Gap*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1996, p 32.

would be to impinge upon the freedom of God and in particular the freedom of God the Holy Spirit to work and act within history.

The other issue concerning our present investigation is the problem of history. Having barred the admittance of theoretical reason in forming an authentic theodicy our interpretation of history cannot remain abstract but must be the fruit of practical reason. An authentic theodicy therefore rests upon a hermeneutic that facilitates the application of the *a priori* principles of practical reason to history. In order to apply these principles to history mediatory concepts are required. For Metz these mediatory concepts must not be abstract or obscure the individual within history. He therefore identifies ‘suffering’ (*Leid, Leiden*) as the key universal mediatory concept from which we can develop an authentic theodicy.

A short essay titled “*Theology and the University*” transcribes Metz’s response to receiving an honorary degree from the University of Vienna in 1995, and sketches for us some thoughts on universality<sup>294</sup>. Given the context of his address he – like other contemporary theologians who have written on this matter – highlights that “today universities are universities without universalism and without universalists”<sup>295</sup>. Moving from these comments on the academy he notes the “postmodern sensitivity to ...universalistic orientations” and thus the need for “civil courage” if we are to propose a universality in this or the political

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<sup>294</sup> Metz, *PG.*, pp. 133 – 135.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., p. 133. On this issue of the loss of universalism in the university also note Stanley Hauerwas’ contribution, Hauerwas, Stanley, *The State of the University*, Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

sphere. It is here that the universality of suffering is advocated. This universality is built up on several levels. His assumption that “there is no suffering in the world that does not concern us” allows him to propose a “universalism of responsibility” that is “born of the memory of suffering”<sup>296</sup>. While this concept of suffering as a universal is not found in Kant, Metz draws upon Kant’s methodology for his own theodicy. In particular Metz draws upon the rejection of speculative reason as the methodology with which to approach the issue of theodicy. Like Kant he concludes that we must approach the theodicy question with practical reason. Nevertheless, where Kant highlights ‘sincerity of heart’ as foundational to an authentic theodicy, for Metz this is substituted by his category of memory. Indeed, when explaining his hermeneutical usage of memory he states that he is drawing upon “those forms of a practical-critical philosophy of history and society” inspired by “Kant’s practical philosophy”<sup>297</sup>. Aligning this to Benjamin’s conception that history is a history of suffering allows Metz to conceive of this memory of suffering as the “medium for the actualization of reason and freedom” within history<sup>298</sup>. He therefore employs one of the most troubling issues of the very problem of theodicy as the key concept in which to ground its reappraisal.

Yet how can the *memoria passionis* be a medium for the actualization of reason and freedom and thus inform and shape our response to theodicy? Firstly, the empirical fact of suffering does not equate in an unproblematic way with

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<sup>296</sup> Metz, *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>297</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 176.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

unambiguous philosophical meaning in itself. This is problematic, as in seeking to fill with meaning the actual phenomenon of suffering there is a danger that we make suffering an abstract concept, or idealize it in a totalizing explanatory system. For Metz the meaning of suffering is imbued with meaning from its relatedness to the “*memoria passionis, mortis, et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*”<sup>299</sup>. Metz notes that this “specific *memoria passionis* ...forms the basis of the promise of a freedom that will come for everyone”<sup>300</sup>. The meaning of suffering is therefore not “derived from the historical, social, and psychological forces of any given time”, and thus we cannot, as Hegel does, read into history an overall meaning of history derived from the ‘pages’ of history. Rather, the ‘meaning’ of suffering is derived eschatologically and it is this that enables it to be a liberating truth.

The eschatological meaning of suffering does not sublate suffering and by this means solve it as problematic, nor does it answer the question ‘why?’ The theodicy question “is never silenced or taken care of by the Christian message or redemption” this side of the eschaton<sup>301</sup>. Thus we cannot simply gloss over present suffering by saying that it will be all right in the end. This highlights that within history a tension between our present experience of the world and its and our eschatological future remains. For Metz:

Suffering contrasts history and nature, teleology, and eschatology. There is no ‘objective’ reconciliation between the two, no transparent manageable unity<sup>302</sup>.

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<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 5.

<sup>302</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 104.

Within this stream of thought teleology – long adopted by Catholic theology – is to be rejected.

The background to Metz's thought here is a rejection of any theory arising from nature which advocates itself as the ground for norms in political or social life. An eschatological priority determines that it is from history and its future that politics and society must establish its norms, and from this that nature itself can be saved from the "unrestricted exploitation" which threatens the very environment and natural resources essential to human well-being and our continuation as a species<sup>303</sup>. Furthermore, teleological schemes view history and nature as orientated towards a goal, complicity with which gives succour to an evolutionistic logic of progress and the illusion that human reason, technology, and politics can resolve the problems in our world. The rejection of teleology frees our understanding of suffering in history as requiring a goal or purpose and thus frees us from the false comfort offered by Idealism's dialectic or evolution's 'logic'.

Freed from requiring an idealistic teleological goal or purpose for suffering, Metz directs us to the person and example of Jesus as the locus for meaning in suffering. If there is 'meaning' to be found in suffering it is in Christ's command of neighbour love, his witness to the continuity of God's compassion for humankind and in particular the vulnerable who dwell among us<sup>304</sup>. To understand Metz here turns on our understanding of what he means by

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102 – 3.

<sup>304</sup> Ex. 22.22, Ex. 34.6, Lam. 3.22, Matt. 9.36, Jas. 1.27.

eschatological and teleological. We do not think his rejection of teleology is a rejection of natural teleology; an oak seed is always naturally ordered to become an oak tree. This is not what Metz rejects. What he rejects is what we may call historical-teleology; those philosophical, ideological or theological systems that seek to describe the goal of history and the journey to that goal from their reading of present and past events. Hegel is the obvious example of such thought.

Eschatology may likewise be construed as justifying present suffering in light of an acceptable end. This manifests itself in theologies that are apathetic to respond to suffering and its causes or emphasise a salvific endurance of hardship and suffering. This is not the eschatology Metz advocates; rather, he envisions the eschatological future active in our present history. We await the fullness of the eschatological future in which suffering is forever dealt with and God's consolation is unmediated. This is not to say present history and its eschatological future are unrelated. Since the Christ event this future is present within history, albeit in a preliminary way, rather than its ultimate eschatological fullness. That we await this eschatological fullness denotes there can be no immediate eschatological resolution to the problem and meaning of suffering. It is therefore the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus that discloses to us a meaning of suffering in the praxis of compassion that compels us to moral action, which has as its goal the elimination of suffering. This is not done with an eye on ultimate success, as we know that until Christ returns suffering will remain part of life. Nevertheless, we aim at the elimination of suffering as we seek to love God in our obedient witness to his character as compassionate and

to the eschatological kingdom established among us and whose fullness we anticipate as we seek to participate in its wholeness.

So far we have outlined Metz's approach to theodicy. This approach rests upon a turn away from speculative and theoretical reason and builds upon the principles of practical reason for theodicy. Metz does not therefore try to justify God in the face of suffering but announces that in time God will justify himself. Freed from trying to justify God, Metz focuses on practical reason with its question, "What ought I to do in the face of suffering?" This brings his theme of concern for the salvation of others, the theme of liberation, to the fore. The question practical reason poses is answered by exposing ideological structures, including modernity, that numb us to the suffering of others or ensure our complicity in their suffering, coupled with practical action to address suffering. This response is predicated upon understanding suffering eschatologically. Our summary of Metz's position invites comparison with an approach to theodicy based on theoretic reason and which does not have an eschatological horizon. The theodicy of Hans Jonas (1903 – 1993) is a clear example of such an approach.

Jonas, a former student of Heidegger and Husserl, fled Nazi Germany in 1933. After the war he went on to have an acclaimed and prominent academic career, spending two decades at the New School of Social Research in New York. His mother did not escape Nazi Germany and along with millions of other Jews was sent to her death in Auschwitz. Jonas' response to the theodicy

question is, therefore, not merely academic rumination but as a philosopher he felt a moral obligation to give “something like an answer” to the “long gone cry to a silent God” for the victims of Auschwitz and the other death camps<sup>305</sup>.

Jonas argues that God’s silence, God’s apathy in the face of Auschwitz presents the Jew with greater theological difficulties than the Christian<sup>306</sup>. His rationale for this, one we shall examine further below, is that for the Jew God is ‘Lord of History’, whereas for the Christian God is primarily above and out-with time and history. Jonas crystallizes ‘the problem’ of theodicy around the existence of evil in the face of three propositions about God: that He is loving; that He is all powerful; that He is knowable<sup>307</sup>. He comments:

The three attributes at stake – absolute goodness, absolute power, and intelligibility – stand in such logical relation to one another that the conjunction of any two of them excludes the third<sup>308</sup>.

Under this scheme we are therefore faced with what seems to be a choice: which attributes are intrinsic to our conception of God and which can we go without? The question of whether this is something we can make a choice about is not broached.

The attribute Jonas believes we can forgo, from the perspective of Jewish theology, and philosophically, is omnipotence. This is not, however, the limiting

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<sup>305</sup> Jonas, Hans, “*God After Auschwitz*”, in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 67, No. 1, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>307</sup> Jonas considers the long tradition of martyrdom within Judaism and states that within this there is the acknowledgement that it is “precisely the innocent and just [who] suffer the worst”. Hope was not absent from this as “through their sacrifice shone the light of promise, of the final redemption by the Messiah to come”. In contrast the Jews murdered in Auschwitz did not die for the sake of, or because of faith. Nor because of “any self-affirmed bend of their being as persons were they murdered”.

<sup>308</sup> Jonas, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.



of God's power as a voluntary act by God on our behalf so as to protect "creation's own autonomous right" to act<sup>309</sup>. This in his view is an unacceptable solution, for if God's limitedness were voluntary then a good, loving, and caring God would have temporarily revoked this restriction on His power so as to have miraculously acted in Auschwitz. Jonas proposes that God has not limited His power but has, albeit temporarily, "divested himself of any power to interfere" in our world<sup>310</sup>. By discarding God's omnipotence Jonas ends up with "God who appears as one who is absolutely and completely impotent" and is therefore unable to console at any level<sup>311</sup>.

Lacking Metz's eschatological aspect, which understands God's future as active in present human history, Jonas' approach to theodicy leaves us with a God who is 'completely impotent'. There is not within Jonas' conception of theodicy any co-operative work between human kind and God to address the issues of suffering. We are on our own and responsibility for responding to suffering lies squarely upon humankind, a view that lends itself to some form of civic humanism. Having considered Metz's theodicy, we must ask of Jonas' approach: "Does the reliance upon theoretical reason obscure to the point of impotence questions practical reason asks?" Our answer to this question, one that we believe Metz would also give, is yes. A reliance upon theoretic reason leads to both a distortion and abstraction of reality, in which attempts to liberate those who suffer from conditions of suffering are marginalised. Jonas' theodicy

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> Bayer, Oswald, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Trans. Thomas H. Trapp), Grand Rapids : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008, p. 207.

lacks the resources and appears disinterested in critiquing the structures that support and authenticate conditions of suffering. It, unlike Metz's theology, lacks any liberating thrust, any sense of God's and the world's eschatological freedom finding concrete form, albeit in anticipation of the fullness of New Creation.

While eschatology is significant in the divergence in the theodicy of Metz and Jonas, this is not the only decisive factor in this difference. It is possible to understand theodicy with a similar eschatological perspective as Metz and yet find a very different resolution to theodicy to that which he finds. Metz's friend and at times theological collaborator Jürgen Moltmann is representative of an eschatological approach to theodicy that differs from Metz.

Moltmann's starting point is conventionally the "question of the righteousness of God in the history of the suffering of the world"<sup>312</sup>. He argues from an eschatological standpoint that this presence of evil and suffering does not put into question God's righteousness. The hope for resurrection is key to his reasoning in this regard. In raising Jesus from the dead God "manifests his true righteousness", that by grace he can make "righteous the unrighteous and those without rights"<sup>313</sup>. This hope is transformative of our present situation for one does not merely await this resurrection but in raising Jesus from the dead the future of the world is already present within history: "The future has already

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<sup>312</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Tran. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden), London: SCM Press, 1974, 2001, p. 179.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

begun”<sup>314</sup>. Thus, God’s righteousness justifies by grace both the victim and the oppressor in this present age, creating “a new mankind with a new humanity”<sup>315</sup>.

There is therefore agreement between Metz and Moltmann that eschatology, in which the future of the world is already present within history, is key to understanding theodicy. However, Moltmann’s methodology, like Jonas’, is essentially that of theoretic reason and this approach leads him to theological speculation upon relations of God’s love, suffering and the inner life of the Trinity. He concludes that we must reject the doctrine of impassibility and proposes that God suffers with his creation. Moltmann’s approach, while different in detail, corresponds to Jonas’ in that a resolution to the theodicy issue is gained by means of limiting the traditional understanding of God. Both require that a traditional and accepted attribute of God be radically re-defined or rejected.

By discarding God’s impassibility Moltmann ends up with a God who can suffer with us in solidarity, but like Jonas’ God, is incapable of effecting change. Moltmann’s conception of God may allow us to say that God in solidarity with the Jews, gypsies, political dissenters or the disabled, was present in the Nazi death camps, but this answer seems problematic. It resolves the issue of theodicy by subsuming the human history of suffering “into a theological dialectic of Trinitarian soteriology”<sup>316</sup>. Thus while Moltmann is highly critical of

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<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-6.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>316</sup> Metz, *ET*, p. 27.

Hegel in places, the influence of his thought, directly and as mediated by the influence of Ernst Bloch, is clear. In the end for Moltmann human suffering is sublated by the suffering of God, and with this theodicy is resolved within a teleological framework of divine suffering. In commenting on Moltmann's and others' "discourse of the suffering God", Metz rhetorically asks: "Is there too much of Hegel at play, too much reducing the interpretation of suffering to its concept?"<sup>317</sup>. What is Metz's concern at the Hegelian element in theopaschite responses to suffering like Moltmann's, and what is the importance of saying the interpretation of suffering is reduced to its concept? To answer these questions we must understand Hegel's use of concept (*Begriff*). Hegel taught that our understanding of the particular is not immediate but is mediated through our understanding of the universal. Our understanding of the particular is therefore predicated upon its relation to its concept. This means that an encounter with a suffering person is understood by its relation to the concept of suffering. This relation of the particular to the universal in Hegel "echoes Kant's insistence in the first Critique that 'intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts without intuitions are empty'"<sup>318</sup>. Thus, part of Metz's rejection of Hegel is that he bears too strong a resemblance to Kant of the first Critique.

Reducing the interpretation of suffering to its concept emphasises the difficulty Metz sees in relating theoretical reason to practical reason in a unified philosophical scheme. The Hegelian approach means our concern becomes focused upon the relation of the concept to the Absolute. The question practical

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<sup>317</sup> Metz, *TT*, p. 117.

<sup>318</sup> Bowie, A., *Introduction to German Philosophy*, Cambridge : Polity Press, 2008, p. 83.

reason brings - “What ought I to do?” - is overwhelmed by theoretical considerations and thus we fail to do anything. Furthermore, to reduce suffering to its Hegelian concept is to commit to its sublation in Hegel’s dialectic in which that which appear to be opposed to each other – suffering and wholeness – necessarily belong together and are thus in a particular sense identical. In this understanding suffering is not a lack of wholeness, it is not absence as Augustine understood evil, but it is necessary and therefore in some sense justified as the dialectic partner to wholeness.

Metz further argues that to find consolation for human suffering in the discourse about God’s suffering is to offend the dignity of God and of the human sufferer. The dignity of God is offended as the Hegelian characteristic of overcoming oppositions and divisions of “seeing the infinite in the finite and the finite in the infinite” endangers the basic theological conviction that the distinction between Creator and creature must be maintained<sup>319</sup>. Metz states that “for the sake of God and for the sake of humankind” we must respect the “nontransferable negative mystery of human suffering”<sup>320</sup>. To drive home this point he approvingly quotes his mentor Rahner as stating: “To put it very primitively – it does not help me at all to get out my dirty mess and despair just because things are going just as badly for God”<sup>321</sup>.

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<sup>319</sup> Copleston, F., *Op. cit.*, p. 11, p. 166.

<sup>320</sup> Metz, *PG.*, pp. 118-9.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

The promise held out to us of establishing the meaning of suffering in the *memoria passionis* of Jesus is not without difficulties. For this to maintain its efficacy we require to keep the memory of suffering in history related to the *memoria passionis* of Jesus. In reflecting upon the “itinerary” of his theology Metz writes, in the late 90s, that the core of his theology, its leitmotif is “the *memoria passionis*, the remembrance of the suffering of others”<sup>322</sup>. This formulation of his leitmotif represents a subtle yet potentially substantive change from his earlier writings where it was described as the “*memoria passionis, mortis, et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*”. Does Metz expect his reader to link this general memory of suffering, that is, the remembrance of the suffering of others to a remembrance of Christ’s suffering? Or does his theology lose its Christological moorings and thus drift towards a civic humanism? While at times the link between the memory of suffering of others and the memory of the suffering of Christ is opaque we nevertheless understand Metz as assuming that his reader will make such a link. Metz’s concern for the suffering of others is therefore rooted in our remembrance of Christ’s suffering, even in his later writings. This claim is warranted by his reading and use of Matthew 25: 31 – 46 and its emphasis upon care and practical help for ‘the least’ that is linked to Christ. This not only links a general remembrance of suffering to the remembrance of Christ’s suffering but, mindful that theology has a “practical intent”, it answers the question as to how we practically remember Christ’s suffering. Metz’s mystical-political praxis brings together reflection and action in a “mysticism of open eyes” that Christologically

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<sup>322</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 5.

“makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering ...pays attention to it and takes responsibility for it, for the sake of God who is a friend to human beings”<sup>323</sup>.

This anchoring of the meaning of suffering in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus should not be misunderstood as supporting the myth of redemptive violence. The liberative power of suffering, in which suffering is freely taken on for the other and on behalf of the other, is not born of violence but love, compassion and obedience. Yet suffering willingly undergone for a purpose, undergone for the sake of the ‘other’ is of a different order to suffering experienced because it is inescapable. The former is solidaristic suffering while the latter results from a lack of agency and is therefore connected to the loss of being a subject. As such, ‘inescapable suffering’ speaks of the powerlessness and lack of agency of the one who suffers. We suffer because we cannot act and cannot change the circumstances of our suffering either by removing yourself from that situation of suffering or acting upon that which is the cause of suffering. This lack of agency includes the loss of voice and of being heard. For Metz suffering ultimately leads to prayer, to a crying out to and for God.

Building upon Metz’s thoughts on prayer we would argue that this crying to God does not validate the suffering; suffering is not to be accepted as our ‘lot in life’. Rather, to cry to God for God is an act of reclaiming agency, however small, by the one who is suffering. Prayer is not the acceptance of suffering but a first and vital act in its ending as the sufferer wrestles for a degree of agency of

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<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

their own and appeals to God for his consolation. Metz is therefore right to link suffering to the issue of being a subject and its antithesis non-identity. The person who experiences non-identity is robbed of agency and *ipso facto* suffers. Suffering incurred by the 'rich and powerful' – solidaristic suffering - by relinquishing systems of control, power, and privilege is liberative. In this action there is a liberation of the bourgeoisie from their guilt, and the forces inducing the suffering of the 'other' are lessened. Metz comments that for the bourgeois "it is not a liberation from what we lack, but from our consumerism in which we are ultimately consuming our very selves"<sup>324</sup>. The rich and powerful are therefore not merely liberated from existential guilt but from the anonymous forces and powers of this age that induce a banality in the form of enslavement to consumer products. Politically this requires changes in the balance of power between individuals, groups of people and nations. In doing so, suffering is reduced, as agency in which people are empowered as subjects is given. Yet, more powerfully than this – in obedience to Christ's commands, our taking on of suffering on behalf of the other is by the work and empowering of the Spirit a participation of his sufferings<sup>325</sup>. The power at work here is not violence, but kenosis as described in Wesley's great hymn *And Can it Be*, where he states that Christ "emptied himself of all but love"<sup>326</sup>.

We noted earlier that the methodology Jonas and Moltmann pursue in their theodicies leads them to forgo an aspect of God's character, as it has

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<sup>324</sup> Metz, *EC*, p. 42

<sup>325</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 1984.

<sup>326</sup> Whaling, Frank (Ed.), *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns*, Mahwah : Paulist Press, 1981, p. 197.



traditionally been understood. At the heart Moltmann's approach is the contemporary theological penchant for discussing suffering *in* God or between members of the Trinity. Metz does not think theodicy hinges upon this and thus does not enter into theological discussions on God's passibility. God is not a "problem" to be solved<sup>327</sup>. Furthermore, his primacy of practical reason leads him away from such "speculative" enterprises<sup>328</sup>. It also seems to us that his qualified acceptance of ideology critique via Marx and the Frankfurt School means theodicies such as Jonas' or Moltmann's would be subject to this. For Marx ideology "amounts either to a distorted conception" of the history of men "or to a complete abstraction from it"<sup>329</sup>. Jonas' theodicy in particular is both a distortion of reality and an abstraction from reality, as it makes no attempt to liberate those who suffer from conditions of suffering. Nor does this theodicy seek to critique structures that support and authenticate conditions of suffering. Liberation is therefore a key theme / component of the Metzian approach to theodicy.

What liberation is, however, requires to be articulated. Metz is influenced by a Marxian conception of liberation. Engels and Marx stated that liberation is "a historical and not a mental act, and is brought about by historical conditions"<sup>330</sup>. Their concern was that in 1840s Germany change was merely attitudinal but did not provide adequate or increased food, drink, clothing or

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<sup>327</sup> Metz, *ET*, p. 26.

<sup>328</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 69.

<sup>329</sup> Marx, Karl, & Engels, Friedrich, *The German Ideology* (Trans. Not stated), New York, Prometheus Books, 1845, 1998, p. 34.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

housing for working people. These mental changes were a “substitute” for the material-practical historical change needed<sup>331</sup>. Metz understands our current situation in a similar way. Abstract considerations of suffering substitute, distract and suppress practical responses. This understanding of liberation, along with his employment of ideology critique, in part, explains the attentiveness to concrete historical situations. Yet while he draws to our attention the historical and material conditions contributing to structures of suffering he does not fully succumb to the Marxist dualism of ‘historical’ and ‘mental’. By adopting what he calls a mystical-political stance he resists reducing reality to materialism or history. His political theology does not therefore just seek liberation by changes to historical and material conditions, but in recognition that the eschaton cannot be fully realized until Christ returns, and thus not by merely political or social means, consolation is also required. Suffering to one degree or another shall always be present until the one who suffered for us wipes away our tears and all the antecedents of suffering are destroyed (Rev 21).

Key to Metz’s conception of liberation, and therefore his understanding of theodicy, is the task of exposing the ideological structures that confine those living comfortable Western-lifestyles to a suffering free citadel which condemns those ‘outside’ to the harsh realities of poverty, marginalization, powerlessness, victimization, and oppression. This is his critique of the bourgeoisie, who enchanted by the myth of progress and beholden to neophilia, insatiably consume all late-capitalism has to offer. We cannot consume our way out of

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<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

suffering for the dialectic of consumerism means that the market system providing affordable products to a mass market impoverishes many, particularly in the global south. The dominant material relations that secure 'Western' comfort and thus dialectically the discomfort and suffering of 'others', are predicated on the ideologies which support Western lifestyles. "The class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force" and the predominant ideas issuing from the powerful "are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations"<sup>332</sup>. Thus, aspirations in Western society are mirrored by the poor of the non-Western world, with the paradoxical result that as they escape poverty and conditions of suffering so their lifestyle enslaves and oppresses those to whom they once belonged. Liberation therefore must be more than just a change in material-historical conditions otherwise the oppressor – oppressed, wealthy – poor relations are endlessly replicated.

This thought that liberation must be more than merely a change in material-historical conditions alerts us to an aspect of liberation not sufficiently highlighted that is important to theodicy as modernity critique that is immersed in the biblical tradition. If liberation is to be holistic and lead to freedom from oppressive structures then we must consider not only what we are being freed from but also freed for and towards. Indeed, if liberation is to be holistic it cannot merely be equated with an improvement in material circumstances, important as that may be, but it must also be a spiritual and mental liberation.

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<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

The Apostle Paul described this as the “renewal of our minds” (Rom. 12: 2) to which an important promise is attached, that is, the capacity to “discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect”. If we are to know and imagine what form liberation may take within our world we require such an act of human thinking in which as we renew our minds God’s Spirit awakens us to possibility as it has yet to be realised, and thus to what we are freed for. This mental liberation is multifaceted and must not be restricted to an anterior freeing of the will from a pusillanimous or irresolute mind, the mental inability to liberate oneself from oppression given the possession of a slave mentality, what we may call the ability to imagine and vision, but also requires liberation from those mental habits which seek to continue to enslave and bind us to practices of oppression. These mental habits may take the form of non-thinking, a dullness of thought that may be described as sleep-walking in which we are swept along by events and which Arendt calls banality. It may also take the form of entrenched ideological thinking. This, and other forms of thinking that do not conform to what it means to “put on Christ”, are what we must be freed from. Thus, if liberation is not to lead once more to the enslavement of others, it must be more than a restructuring of the balance of power in which those who previously were acted upon due to a lack of agency gain a will-to-power. Liberation as a renewal of our minds frees us to assume a position of moral agency within God’s created order and to understand power in the contradictory terms we have already noted: kenotic love.

By employing a different way of thinking about evil and suffering from that used in doctrinal theodicy, Metz opens up the possibility, that by thinking differently, we may be able to think more deeply and clearly about evil, suffering and its structure and consequences. Our concern is not an anterior freeing of the will that allows the subject to imagine a better and new reality, important as this may be. Rather, the aspect we wish to highlight is seen in biblical narrative of the liberation of the Hebrew people from their slavery in Egypt. The escape, the physical freedom of the Hebrew people from Egypt is dramatic and complete. Egypt and its suffering is left behind. Yet, spiritually and politically the people retain many of the mental habits, a way of thinking that belongs to being a slave in Egypt, rather than a people whose freedom is as the people of God. Their freedom of mind lags behind their physical freedom and is a gradual “pedagogy of success and failures”<sup>333</sup>. Marx could not see beyond the materialist and historical components of liberation and thus by-passes the slow pedagogy of living a life oscillating between the freedom of the new situation and the reversion back to the former habits of the heart. He thus in commenting on the French revolution states that “the present generation ...like the Jews whom Moses led through the wilderness ...must go under in order to make room for the men who are able to cope with a new world”<sup>334</sup>. Reminiscent of a Darwinian selection, under Marx, there is no real hope for the weak, for those most vulnerable to suffering. They must “go under”, must die to ‘make room’ for the strong. Violent revolution heaps suffering upon suffering and brings liberation to

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<sup>333</sup> Walzer, Michael, *Exodus and Revolution*, Basic Books, 1985, p. 58.

<sup>334</sup> Marx, Karl, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*, 1850, <http://www.marxist.org>

the few rather than the many. Violent revolution cannot 'solve' or eradicate the problem of suffering for it will always create a new populace who are non-subjects, who are oppressed or deserving of death. Political liberation that receives its impulse from an evangelical political theology should be sensitive to the reality of a slow pedagogy of success and failures. As such it must be open to a spiritual and political renewing of the mind that is sensitive to the Lordship of Christ and flowing from this a reconfiguring of what power means and how it should be exercised.

For Metz the question *Wo bleibt Gott?* is not voiced in an agnostic or atheistic tone, but it is the voice of the person of faith in the face of our world's history of suffering. The question of 'Where has God got to' is therefore radically expressed in the face of suffering in the form, "Have we been abandoned by God?" "Expressed this way, the question of missing God is the form theodicy takes in political theology"<sup>335</sup>. We shall in the next chapter consider the theology that lies behind Metz's concept of abandonment by God. Here it is enough to say that for Metz there is not a metaphysical consolation of having a solution, an answer, to the problem of evil and suffering. The consolation one might find in theoretical and metaphysical solutions Metz rejects is the consolation of myth. The Christian community should however, according to Metz, be marked by a poverty of spirit which like Israel refuses to be consoled by such myths. Her only consolation is God. The presence of suffering must therefore remain a problem, remain something that is not solved and cannot be solved until Christ returns. In

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<sup>335</sup> Downey, Manenann and Ostovich (Eds.), *Missing God?*, Berlin : Lit, 2006, p. 2.

this way it reminds us of the limits of politics, of our finitude and fragility, and thus turns us to God, even if in that turning it is a cry of perplexity or anger, ‘God, what are you waiting for?’

The ubiquity of suffering seems to obscure our view of God. Indeed in the secularized west it is “technologically present in our lives in a way that was not possible until this century (in terms of either the technology that produce and manufacture new kinds of suffering or the techniques developed to shape, represent, and communicate it)”<sup>336</sup>. This presence of suffering carries with it the danger that we acquiesce to its presence and accept it as part of the structure of the world. As Metz comments:

We get used to the crises over poverty in the world that seem increasingly to be a permanent part of the scene, so that we shrug our shoulders and delegate them to an anonymous social evolution that has no subjects<sup>337</sup>.

It also carries the containment danger that we ‘give up’ on God. Yet, a political theology attuned to the theodicy issue keeps us sensitive to the reality that suffering was not God’s intention for his creation; it is not part of the grain of the universe as He created it. This sensitivity does not allow us to remain apathetic to the presence of suffering in the world, but stirs us to seek the world that is yet to come in the presence of the world that is now.

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<sup>336</sup> Halpern, Cynthia, *Suffering, Politics, Power*, New York : State University of New York, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>337</sup> Metz, *FF.*, p. 68.

## Chapter 4.

### Has God abandoned us?

#### Dereliction and *Theologia Crucis*.

Christ's cry of dereliction in Metz.

In this chapter we shall argue that the quiddity of Metz's theology is to be found in the primal place he gives to Christ's cry of godforsakenness from the cross. In defending this position we shall present the ground for this assertion and demonstrate that it is the controlling centre of his theology, shaping all aspects of his theology and in particular his understanding of suffering.

Key to our claim that Christ's cry is formative for Metz's theology from at least the late 1960s is a biographical note he writes in place of a foreword to a collection of his essays. He recalls an event from World War II when he was conscripted to the German army aged sixteen<sup>338</sup>. He was ordered to take a message to battalion headquarters and upon his return the next morning he "found only the dead, nothing but the dead, overrun by a combined bomber and tank assault"<sup>339</sup>. Reflecting upon this he states: "I remember nothing but a wordless cry"<sup>340</sup>. It is not clear whose wordless cry this was: Metz's, his dead comrades', the world's? This equivocal statement allows us to assign the wordless cry to all three. That the dead and vanquished in history cry out is

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<sup>338</sup> Similar points were made by biographical reference to his youthful wartime experience in a 1987 essay, *Communicating a Dangerous Memory*. See *LS*, pp. 135 – 149.

<sup>339</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 1.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. Emphasis added.



important to Metz. Metz as survivor, yet mourning co-sufferer, also cries wordlessly. The wordless cry of the dead and the living contributes to and is an expression of the world, which also cries out. Metz does not link this wordless cry to the groan of creation and the groan of the children of God Paul describes in Romans 8, yet we think there is a case to be made for understanding these are related. Paul describes there being a groaning, a longing for freedom and release from the suffering of 'bondage and decay', as part of the fabric of creation in its fallen state. Likewise, Metz's wordless cry is part of the warp and weft of history as a history of suffering. This wordless cry issues throughout history and finds its articulation in the mouth of Christ on the cross who "intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:27). Christ as the representative of not just human kind, but of the world he has come to save, overcomes the silence and non-identity of suffering and cries out on our behalf.

Metz further states that this event, this wordless cry, "shines through all my theological work, even to this day", giving his work its sensitivity to theodicy and the memory of the suffering of others<sup>341</sup>. The memory of the suffering of others has a soteriological facet as it raises questions around the salvation of others<sup>342</sup>. Having from his own words established that *a* cry informs his whole theological project, if we are to substantiate our claim that it is Christ's cry of godforsakenness which is the controlling centre of his theology and shapes his understanding of suffering, we need to establish the relationship between Metz's cry and Christ's. Key to this task is unpacking the relationship between Metz's

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<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> Metz, *Theology as Theodicy*, in *PG.*, p. 55.

use of the Latin phrase *memoria passionis* (memory of suffering), and his category of cry.

In his biographical vignette he writes, “the leitmotif of this biographical path is quite probably the *memoria passionis*, the remembrance of the suffering of others as a basic category of Christian discourse about God”<sup>343</sup>. This leads him to conclude that the meaning of human language is rooted not in communication as Habermas argues, but in “that cry”. This raises the question as to which cry ‘that’ refers to? From the text we conclude that he is not simply referring to his own cry, the cry he heard in the war, but is referencing the “loud, or at times silent cry” that is in “everything”<sup>344</sup>. From our reading of Metz, we conclude he understands cry to be a questioning of God for his provision of a remedy for evil, a questioning arising out of suffering experienced. This observation, the interwoven relationship of cry, *memoria passionis* and prayer provides several important links that aid our argument.

It is our contention that at the heart of Metz’s leitmotif is Christ’s cry. Metz’s category of *memoria passionis* is anchored in and takes its meaning from the specific Christian memoria that announces itself as the “*memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*”<sup>345</sup>. It is Christ-as-logos who gives expression to the wordless cry of suffering human kind and a suffering world in his own cry “*Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?*” (Mk 15:34). Christ himself cries “for light in the

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<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> Metz, *The Future in the Memory of Suffering*, in *FF*, pp. 10 – 11.

face of God shrouded in darkness” to not only give voice to our cry, but that in following him we may also cry out to God on behalf of those who have not yet found their voice: the victim and the vanquished in this world who have been robbed of their identity as subjects and thus their capacity for agency<sup>346</sup>. Our argument above is substantiated by consideration of explicit references to Christ’s cry in Metz’s work.

Metz’s first explicit reference to Christ’s cry of God-forsakenness occurs in *Ermutigung zum Gebet*, a short book on prayer published in 1977 and co-authored by his friend and mentor Karl Rahner. This book is in two parts, Metz having written part one, *the courage to pray*, and Rahner the second, *prayer to the saints*. It is to this rather neglected text we now turn.

While ostensibly a book about prayer, it is equally a book about suffering.

Two quotations highlight this and in many senses summarise the book:

The language of prayer does not subdue or tame the language of suffering, it expands it immeasurably, ineffably<sup>347</sup>.

The language of prayer is the language of ardent questioning of God, and therein the language that expresses our distressed (*leidvoll*) anxious anticipation that God, in the face of the dark history of the world, will one day vindicate himself<sup>348</sup>.

The themes of questioning God, that prayer and suffering belong together and that one day God will vindicate himself in the face of the history of suffering are enduring Metzian themes. Undergirding this language of prayer and this stance

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<sup>346</sup> Metz, On the *Biographical itinerary of my theology*, in *PG*, p. 5.

<sup>347</sup> Metz, *EG*, p. 21.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

towards suffering is faithfulness to God that is included in what Metz terms *Leiden an Gott*. That this is a continuing thought in Metz is highlighted as thirteen years later when he writes his essay *Theologie als Theodizee* (1990) he states that Christ's "cry from the cross is the cry of one God-forsaken, who for his part at no time had forsaken God"<sup>349</sup>. The same sentence appeared in his earlier thoughts on prayer, with only one word of difference. In the earlier version he describes Christ's cry as *Gebetsschrei*, a cry of prayer, whereas by nineteen-ninety this is shortened to *Schrei*. This minor change does not amend the meaning of the sentence and its main point, that the one who was forsaken did not forsake.

Likewise, in waiting for the day in which God vindicates himself and confronted by the history of our suffering world, we cling to God and refuse to forsake him. This clinging to God is, however, not a romanticised or idealised piety but will include an ardent questioning of God. Metz describes this as praying, in the spirit of Jesus which cannot be done with our back turned to the suffering of others. Prayer in the spirit of Jesus, which is to pray with open eyes to the suffering of others demands a philanthropy (*Menschenfreudlichkeit*) that is not negotiable<sup>350</sup>. Thus, this faithfulness, the link between the language of prayer and the language of suffering, does not result in a passivity, apathy or masochistic acceptance of suffering on our part, but in action. There is not a separation of contemplation and action as two isolated callings or spheres, but in this practical fundamental theology they are joined together. This is a

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<sup>349</sup> Metz, *TT*, p. 115.

<sup>350</sup> Metz, *EG*, p. 28.

“mysticism of open eyes”, a mystical-political Christianity that militates against any such apathy or indifference<sup>351</sup>.

So Metz asserts that prayer does not lead to our apathy, but what about God, is he apathetic, has God abandoned us? Metz may well be thinking of Nietzsche when he imagines an enlightenment sceptic rhetorically asking, “Is this faceless, silent God to whom we pray not an apathetic idol, a Baal, a Moloch?”<sup>352</sup>. His answer is forthright regarding the fact that God is not an apathetic idol, but it is not free from ambiguity, making it hard to envision how he understands God’s interaction with his world. He points us to the prayers of Christ. However, given his conflation of the language of prayer and the language of suffering and the prominence of Christ’s cry within this, the experience of God-forsakenness is brought to the fore. This is, perhaps, tempered by an appeal to God’s fatherhood. Metz comments: “that the God of his prayer is ‘our Father’ is clear: not only from his prayers but also from his entire destiny, his whole demeanour, his whole way”<sup>353</sup>. Metz does not unpack for us what it means to call God ‘our’ father. He moves on swiftly to simply state that God “is not a humiliating tyrant, not the projection of worldly dominion and authority”<sup>354</sup>. Rather, he is “the God of a scarcely dreamed of home, the God who wipes away teardrops and takes the lost into the arms of his radiant mercy”<sup>355</sup>. Is this, however, not simply to make the problem of suffering a problem for eschatology

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<sup>351</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 163.

<sup>352</sup> Metz, *EG*, p. 30.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

and promise that it will be alright in the end? Does this not make God an absent landlord preparing a ‘scarcely dreamed of home’ for our future while inactive about our present squalor? Metz does not provide us with a clear answer to these questions. Instead, it is “from our behaviour” that those who suffer “must be able to ascertain the characteristics of this liberating and uplifting God”<sup>356</sup>. What is left unsaid is the relationship between God’s agency and ours. Is there a pneumatology implicit in Metz’s appeal to our ability to behave in such a way that God’s character is made visible? He is silent on these issues.

There is a gap of eight years from *Ermutigung zum Gebet* until Metz explicitly refers to Christ’s cry of dereliction again, this time in an essay called *Unterwegs zu einer nachidealistischen Theology*. Explicit reference again falls silent for another five years until it comes to the fore in his writings during the 1990s, where it plays an important role in a number of his essays: *Theologie als Theodizee* (1990), *A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today* (1991), and *Kirche nach Auschwitz* (1993). This chronology does not contradict our claim regarding the importance of Christ’s cry in Metz theology, but rather it substantiates its enduring influence upon it over many years. Moreover, the importance of Christ’s cry is made clear by Metz himself.

In *Kirche nach Auschwitz* he states emphatically: “at the centre (*Zentrum*) of the Christian faith this cry of the Son, forsaken by God, stands”<sup>357</sup>. There are two ways we might hear Metz’s description of Christ’s cry of God-forsakenness as

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<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>357</sup> Metz, *Kirche nach Auschwitz*, Hamburg : Akademie Bibliothek, 1993, p. 10.

the centre of the Christian faith. We could understand him as claiming this as the central event in the Christian faith and in so doing displace the cross and resurrection at the centre. We might also understand him as stating it is faith's heart, the organ that pumps the life blood of the Christian faith. We read Metz as claiming the latter and his emphasis upon Christ's cry is an attempt to recover something important he thinks the church has neglected. The context of this quote is a chiding of the church for what Metz perceives as an attenuating (*abgeschwächt*) of Christ's cry and its replacement with "more pious words of farewell"<sup>358</sup>. Nevertheless, this is more than the mere recovery of a feature of the biblical witness that has been downplayed. He aligns Christ's cry with Job's questioning, a move that suggests this stance of crying to God, of experiencing abandonment, is not unique<sup>359</sup>. Furthermore, often his discussion of Christ's cry is within the context of a discussion of theodicy or more specifically Auschwitz. This context sharpens and intensifies the issue of god-forsakenness. It is, therefore, our conclusion that he is claiming a priority for this cry in our understanding of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. We conclude he does indeed understand this cry of god-forsakenness to be the heart of the Christian faith and thus, a guiding principle for our discourse about God and our understanding of Christian discipleship. This being so, Metz's discourse about God is shaped by the theme of absence, and specifically God's absence. Moreover, for Metz suffering comes to be defined in terms of absence and god-forsakenness.

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<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 67.

It is Metz's contention that our deafness to Christ's cry and our negligence of how this informs our Christian belief, has facilitated a distortion of the gospel. Sensitive to the suffering of others, to the theodicy question, to the dialectic of modern life and in particular economic disparities, Metz expounds the view that God is on the side of the vanquished. This is not merely 'God's preferential option of the poor', although this is by no means excluded. Rather, Metz draws our attention to the underside of history, to its victim in the face of the ideology of progress and modernity. Metz emphasises that those who have been vanquished are subjects before God and, therefore, should be given that status by us, making them visible to our actions. Our awareness of the vanquished other should cause reflection and change, given their critique of our bourgeois culture and religion that is a source of their oppression and ironically also our oppression as it negates true freedom. He is thus critical of any triumphalism in the church and Christian theology. To paraphrase him, we sing and rejoice too much in our Christianity and cry and mourn too little<sup>360</sup>. The reason he gives for this and our deficiency in craving true consolation (*Tröstungshunger*), is we lack a sense of what is absent. We have idolatrously sought comfort from myths, be that Idealism, Marxism, evolutionary time, or technological and economic progress. Our capacity for such myth is no doubt due to our fallen state in which we are apt to reject truth. Thus, in the "message of the resurrection ...the cry of the crucified Christ has become inaudible" to our

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<sup>360</sup> See Metz, *KnA*, p10, "Ist womöglich zu viel Gesang und zu wenig Geschrei in unserem Christentum? Zu viel Jubel und zu wenig Trauer, zu viel Zustimmung und zu wenig Vermissten, zu viel Trost und zu wenig Tröstungshunger?"



ears, meaning that we hear “not the gospel, but a victor’s myth”<sup>361</sup>. That he highlights we “zu wenig Vermissten” reinforces and amplifies his emphasis on god-forsakenness and absence, bolstering our argument that it is this facet, rather than the cross in general, which he understands as the lifeblood of the Christian faith<sup>362</sup>.

Metz’s comment that we sing and rejoice too much and mourn and cry too little is made twice: in *Kirche nach Auschwitz* (1993), and *A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today* (1991). In this latter essay this comment leads to a discussion of the second Beatitude, “Blessed are they who mourn”<sup>363</sup>. He states that to mourn is

...to sense something as substantively absent. Does this mean: to sense God’s absence? Absolutely! That sense of absence plays between mourning and hope. Only because of a sort of Christian delusion of perfection and reconciliation have we convinced ourselves that mourning ought to be something foreign to us<sup>364</sup>.

Key in this statement is his use of the word *substantively*. Is this adverb used to emphasise that God is not seemingly absent, but actually absent? Is Metz stating that our sensing of God’s absence is not phenomenological but ontological? Furthermore, how is any sensing of God’s absence, as Metz describes it, related to Christ’s cry of abandonment?

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<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10 – 11.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>363</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 159.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

Is Metz like others of his generation claiming the death of God in some sense? His friend Dorothee Soelle certainly argued in her 1969 essay, *Christ the Representative: An essay after the Death of God*, for understanding God who supernaturally intervenes in the world is dead<sup>365</sup>. It is possible to read Metz as proposing something akin to this, yet what we cannot do is understand him in joining Nietzsche in stating God as dead. The Nietzschean claim that God is dead is quite different from Soelle's. Indeed, Metz argues against a Nietzschean concept of God is dead as he astutely understands that to proclaim the death of God is to simultaneously proclaim the death of the human subject<sup>366</sup>. Thus, his sensing of God's absence leads him on a very different path to Nietzsche. To sense God's absence leads Metz to prayer, which given our earlier comments, brings us back to a cry. This cry, our prayer, is, Metz suggests, not all mourning nor all angst but is also a cry of hope; it is "to ask God for God"<sup>367</sup>. He proposes that this is the only consolation we are promised and is the "central teaching about prayer in Lk. 11:1 – 13" in which he specifically directs our attention to verse 13<sup>368</sup>:

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Lk. 11:13).

Metz is not arguing that our asking God for God means we receive here and now a consolation that is ultimate. If we borrow categories from Bonhoeffer,

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<sup>365</sup> Sölle, Dorothee, *Christ the Representative: An Essay in Theology after the 'Death of God'*, London : SCM Press, 1967. Note: Soelle's surname is published with several different spellings, Soelle being the most common, however, in *Christ the Representative* the publisher has spelt her name Sölle.

<sup>366</sup> Metz, *Theology versus Polymythicism*, in *PG*, p. 78.

<sup>367</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 161.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

whom we established influenced Metz, then we may say the consolation he thinks possible is a penultimate consolation. This consolation is not the wiping away of all tears (Rev. 21), for it “does not displace us into a mythical realm of serene harmony and unproblematic, identity-reinforcing peace with oneself”<sup>369</sup>. It is an open-eyed consolation, it is a pedagogy in which we learn to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). Nevertheless, is there an unresolvable conflict in his thought, given he states we may know the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31), yet experience God’s absence?

We take Metz’s apparent inconsistency in urging us to pray for the comfort of the Holy Spirit while at the same time stating that we sense God’s absence as spurring us to ask questions. Therefore, we do not think that he is dissolving the doctrine of the communication of divine attributes within the Trinity, nor is he advocating a form of modalism. Rather he invites us to ask the primordial question: How can we claim God is *substantively* present when the reality and ubiquity of evil mars the world in which we live? Bearing in mind what Metz taught us about theodicy, this is a question for which we can have no definitive answers. All we may do is associate Metz’s use of substantive with the thought of ultimate consolation in the knowledge that it is self evident that we await the fullness of God, his perfect peace and justice and the healing of the nations. What remains, however, are questions surrounding the account of the work of the Holy Spirit that we may draw from Metz’s brief comments, to which we shall return in our last chapter.

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<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Christology informing Metz's understanding.

In starting our consideration of Metz's Christology by asking which takes primacy, Christ as our representative or as our example, we make good on our earlier promise to consider the relationship between a general *memoria passionis* and the specific *memoria passionis* of Christ. It is our argument that the logic for the relationship of this general suffering to the specific suffering of Christ flows from his Christology and particularly from a prioritising of Christ as our exemplar rather than our representative. This is not to claim that the representative motif is entirely absent from Metz. Indeed we will argue that it is this motif which gives substance to the relationship between Israel's cries and Christ's. Nevertheless, the principle Christological topos in Metz is that of example. He states more than once in his writings that:

Christ himself is not merely to be worshiped on high, but rather, he is also and always, a way. So every attempt to know him, to comprehend him, is always a journey, a following. It is only by following and *imitating* him, that we know with whom we are becoming involved. Following Christ is therefore not a subsequent application of the Church's Christology to our life<sup>370</sup>.

Our focus is not Metz's epistemological claims *per se*, but what it means to follow and imitate Christ. This is informed by other statements of Metz. To follow Jesus, to imitate him, is not merely to "admire him as a role model" but requires us to follow St. Paul's instruction in Romans 13:14 to which Metz draws our

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<sup>370</sup> Metz, *Zeit der Orden?*, Freiburg : Herder, 1977, p. 41 (Emphasis added). Metz states in *Facing the Jews*, in remarkably similar phraseology, "Faith as a trusting yielding to will of God means here a being-on-the-road, a being-underway, even being homeless, in brief: discipleship. Christ is truth and way. *Every attempt to know him, to understand him, is always a going, a following.* Only if they follow him, do Christians know with whom they are associated and who saves them". In Metz, *FF.*, p. 46 [Emphasis added.]

attention, to “put on Christ”<sup>371</sup>. This reference to putting on Christ and that we must not simply admire Christ as a role model is significant. There are issues with an imitation or exemplar-Christology and this reference to putting on Christ guards against these. If Jesus is merely a role model whom we should follow then he is reduced to a moral-exemplar among the pantheon of those who may inspire and stimulate us to rectitudinous living.

Bonhoeffer is helpful to us in seeing the implications of understanding Jesus as exemplar. The exemplar paradigm leads to despair and self-condemnation “because I cannot imitate his pattern”<sup>372</sup>. Furthermore, if Christ is merely an example to imitate then “my sins are not forgiven ...and I remain in the power of death”<sup>373</sup>. Because Metz qualifies what it is to follow and imitate Christ by stating we must “put on Christ”, we understand him in light of Bonhoeffer’s warnings about imitation:

But if Jesus is the Christ, the Word of God, then I am not primarily called to emulate him; I am encountered in his work as one who could not possibly do this work myself<sup>374</sup>.

As those who cannot do Christ’s work we require to put on Christ in order that we may follow and as disciples participate in his work. Metz does not develop this motif of putting on Christ and its pneumatological implications further. Although, in repeatedly saying “[F]ollowing Christ always has a twofold structure,” we might assume the pneumatological is implied in the mystical

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<sup>371</sup> Metz, *ZO*, p. 34.

<sup>372</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Christology (Trans. John Bowden)*, London : Collins, 1966, p. 39.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38 – 39.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

element of dual mystical and practical-political structure<sup>375</sup>. However, the relationship between the mystical and practical-political needs, in our view, to be explored in more detail and made explicit. We say this, for if a political theology of a Metzian ilk is not to slip into a theistic inspired humanism, if it is to not merely become “works” (Eph. 2:8 - 10, Jms. 2:14 -26), then the relationship between faith and works and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit must at some point be made clear.

If Jesus is our example then we cannot be passive; he is an example to follow. Thus, being part of him, putting him on or imitating him, all convey something of the active, participatory nature of being a disciple of Christ and not someone who merely believes in Christ. According to Metz, this following takes the form of “obedience, of poverty, of freedom, of joy”<sup>376</sup>. What is envisioned by obedience, poverty, freedom and joy is the subject of *Zeit der Ordern*? What we draw attention to here is that particularly the imperatives of obedience and poverty lead to a solidarity with the marginalised that is more than an “attitude of mind” and is thus “practical and political”<sup>377</sup>.

To follow Christ by putting him on means the path of discipleship is “radical and dangerous”<sup>378</sup>. Indeed Metz points to Christ’s promises that we shall suffer persecution if we are faithful in following him. Thus, when Metz speaks of a general suffering (*memoria passionis*) it is related to the specific

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<sup>375</sup> Metz, *FF*, p. 42.

<sup>376</sup> Metz, *ZO*, p. 36.

<sup>377</sup> Metz, *FC*, pp. 47 – 50.

<sup>378</sup> Metz, *ZO*, p. 34.

suffering of Christ by the topos of following. By following Christ we reject and resist the self-protecting ways of bourgeois religion and culture and in putting on Christ we bring ourselves into conflict with, or against, the “rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness” (Eph. 6:12). Here we are extrapolating from what Metz writes, as he does not develop an explicit exousiology. Nevertheless, we suspect he would be sympathetic to how William Stringfellow, J.H. Yoder and Walter Wink developed a theory of powers that take the form of real earthly institutions. Metz certainly mentions “powers” in a way that suggests a fit with Stringfellow, Yoder and Wink, notably chiding his own church for coming to “amicable arrangements with the secular powers” when “a church community engaged in following Jesus has to put up with being despised by the wise and the powerful”<sup>379</sup>. For Metz a stance of resistance must be taken against the powers. We must resist systems that seek to reduce all of life to modes of exchange, “the anonymous tyrant of possessions” and the enslavement of human freedom to the anonymous dictates of technology and progress<sup>380</sup>. Such resistance inevitably leads to suffering.

There is another cry Metz specifically draws to our attention: the cry of Israel. Metz introduces Israel as a people who embody a true maturity, as they would not be consoled by myth, but only by God himself. He comments:

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<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>380</sup> *FC.*, p. 52.

You could almost say, Israel's election, its capacity for God showed itself in this specific form of poverty and inability: namely the inability to be comforted by myths and ideas<sup>381</sup>.

In introducing Israel in this manner he sets up in opposition occidental and anamnestic rationality. The importance of this should be noted given we previously saw that Metz considers anamnestic rationality to be the essence of the Jewish spirit. It is in this context that he states that Israel's

faithfulness to Yahweh expressed itself in this form of poverty. Pre-eminently Israel always remained ...a "landscape of cries": its faith came not so much to an answer for the suffering experienced; rather in the long run it expressed itself as a questioning of suffering, as an relentless questioning of – Yahweh<sup>382</sup>.

Metz proposed that Christian faithfulness to Yahweh should express itself in this same form of poverty. Such faithfulness requires Christianity to rediscover its Jewish roots and 'spirit', which Metz informs us means "a being-on-the-road ...even being-homeless, in brief: discipleship"<sup>383</sup>. This includes Christ's promise that to faithfully follow him leads to suffering and persecution (Matt. 5:11, 24:9). Israel's landscape of cries thus not only foreshadows Christ's cry, but a cry that is integral to Christianity. Thus, when he is talking of Israel's suffering and her poverty he is evoking the image of a people forsaken by God, a people who cry to God from the depth of suffering, "Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long?" (Lam. 5:20) that is not merely in the past but is experienced today.

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<sup>381</sup> Metz, *Theologie als Theodizee?*, in Olemüller, *Theodizee – Gott vor Gericht?*, München : Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1990 , p. 113. See also Metz, *Theology as Theodicy?*, in *PG*, p. 66, and *Theology versus Polymythicism*, in *PG*, pp. 81 – 2.

<sup>382</sup> Metz, *TT*, p. 114.

<sup>383</sup> Metz, *FF*, p. 46.



In his critique of modernity he hypothesises that the Enlightenment has taken wrong turns and we need a new enlightenment to save us from this false path we are now upon. One consequence of this false path is that it is leading, and has already in many cases led, to the death of the human person as a subject. Two phenomena arising from this “paralysis of human spontaneity and the burial of man in the grave of an economico-technical structuralism” are the inability to mourn and the rise of new myths. His thesis may briefly be stated thus: occidental rationality, technological society and economic planning have converged over Europe to create the conditions in which under pressure from these anonymous and automated processes man is turned into a machine and persons as subjects are lost. One consequence of this is our inability to mourn, which Metz suggests had led to a repression of acknowledgement of suffering in the public sphere. With this loss of mourning there is a loss of true consolation; thus we as a society have turned to neo-myths in which we try to find consolation and meaning. This has led to a second age of *Unmündigkeit* (immaturity): the allusion to Kant by employing this language is one Metz wants us to make<sup>384</sup>. By using the term *Unmündigkeit* Metz invokes his argument against Kant as the rationale underpinning his thoughts on Israel and myth.

For Metz the relationship between Christ’s cry and Israel’s cry is brought into sharp relief by the events of Auschwitz. The Jews of Auschwitz and Jesus on the cross have both experienced what it is to be forsaken by God – at least this is what Metz wants us to understand. This means that god-forsakenness is not a

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<sup>384</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 169.

unique experience of Christ on the cross. It was also the experience of Job and the Jews through several periods of their history. The prominence and conceptual weight he gives to god-forsakenness means that suffering becomes defined in terms of abandonment.

The relationship between Israel as a landscape of cries and Christ's cry is similar to what we have just discussed. Israel likewise resisted the surrounding and dominating powers by remaining poor in spirit<sup>385</sup>. Her consolation was an eschatological expectation of God's vindication, which Metz strongly links to Christ's cry. Indeed, not only is Israel's cry "christologically intensified", but Job's cry and Christ's cry are included in it<sup>386</sup>. However, here Christ as example can only be talked of in terms of being the climax or culmination of a trajectory we see first in biblical Israel. It is therefore Christ as representative that comes to the fore in this relationship. However, as with our comments on 'the powers', Metz does not explicate the relationship between Israel and Christology. Hence in trying to expose the rationale of his thought and draw out its implication we once again have to turn to another thinker. New Testament scholar N.T. Wright notes, there is a deep "thematic unity" in Jewish thought between Israel, the Messiah and the wider human family. The Messiah represents Israel. Wright notes: "The Messiah ... has now been installed as the one through whom God is doing what he intended to do, first through humanity and then through Israel"<sup>387</sup>. Such an "Israel-Christology" means that Metz can follow the Gospel writers and

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<sup>385</sup> Metz, *The Church After Auschwitz*, in *PG.*, p. 125.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, *PG.*, p. 82.

<sup>387</sup> Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1991, p. 29.

St. Paul in attributing what has previously been said of Israel to Christ. When we ask what we may conclude from the foregoing regarding suffering, two prime thoughts surface.

Firstly, by linking the cries of Job, Jesus and Israel and suggesting that the former two are included in the latter, are we to conclude that Metz believes it is Israel's calling to suffer? Or is he suggesting that being poor in spirit, which he understands as a reliance on God that has at its core a rejection of myth and a resistance to the dominant secular powers, will inevitably lead to suffering? It is our opinion, having weighed the evidence that Metz inclines towards the second of these. We cannot, however, rule out aspects of the first nor that he considers suffering to be part of the warp and weft of life in general. Certainly it is not an uncommon thought that to be human is to experience pain and suffering.

This leads us to the second thought arising from Metz's Israel-Christology. What is distinctive regarding Metz is the association of suffering with an as of yet unfulfilled expectation of God's vindication and consolation. What is distinctive is the association Metz makes between suffering and god-forsakenness. Thus, while Christ's suffering on the cross is unique, and "cannot and should not be determined comparatively", the experience of isolation – Christ's friends deserted him in his time of need – and god-forsakenness belong to what it is to suffer<sup>388</sup>.

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<sup>388</sup> Metz, *FC*, p. 63.

To understand god-forsakenness as absence is not the only possibility open to us. Through his prophets God warned biblical Israel that unless she repented of her idolatrous ways and returned to Yhwh, judgement would come upon her. This judgement took the form of a withdrawal of God's presence, a hiding of his face, from his people. The prophet Ezekiel writes:

I will display my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my *judgement* that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them ...the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with me. *So I hid my face from them* and gave them into the hand of their adversaries ...I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and *hid my face from them*. (Ez. 39:21 -24. Emphasis added).

This removal of God's presence was accompanied by Israel's removal from 'the land' and her exile (*galut*) in a strange land. The experience of Israel in judgement opens up the possibility of understanding god-forsakenness as something other than abandonment. Even under judgement God did not abandon his people: Israel continues to be his people, and God remains faithful to them despite their infidelity. Thus, even in exile, even when God hides his face, Israel experiences a mode of God's presence, albeit as his chastisement in order to redeem her. The differentiation we make here between experiencing God's presence as judgement, described in the Old Testament as a hiding of his face, and an experience of god-forsakenness as abandonment, anticipates comments we shall make in our section asking what kind of abandonment Christ suffered on the cross. Here, we anticipate our answer to that question by stating that God is never absent to us, he is always present. This route of understanding forsakenness as a mode of God's presence we call judgement or chastisement is one Metz does not consider.

Underlying Metz's critique of bourgeois religion is his thesis that Christianity has lost its critical power because it has lost sight of its messianic apocalyptic core, which made it susceptible to conversion to a religion at home and comfortable with the dominant powers of European society<sup>389</sup>. At the heart of this thesis is the Christology we have been discussing. However, an important element of his Christology we have not yet highlighted is the apocalyptic. He states:

Following Christ when understood radically, that is when grasped at the roots, is not liveable – 'if the time be not shortened' or, to put it another way, 'if the Lord does not come soon'<sup>390</sup>.

Following Christ is not liveable in Metz's view because it puts demands upon us and, as we have noted, our rejection and resistance to 'the powers' leads to inevitable conflict and suffering.

This apocalyptic theme intensifies as he interacts with Nietzsche and the concept of evolutionary time. Metz wants us to live in the knowledge that we do not have an unending future in which under the auspice of evolutionary time progress can march unrelentingly. Time is finite, yet "[T]he Christian symbol of time coming to an abrupt end has been exchanged for the crypto-religious symbol of evolution"<sup>391</sup>. The result of this is that we have lost any sense of expectation; we have lost a sense of Christian hope in which God acts and in its place succumb to the endless repetition of time. For Metz a rediscovery of the

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<sup>389</sup> See Metz, *Messianic or Bourgeois Religion* in *EC*, pp. 1 – 16.

<sup>390</sup> Metz, *FC*, p. 75.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

apocalyptic invigorates us to prayer, action and prophecy<sup>392</sup>. We cry out in prayer, “Come Lord Jesus,” for we know that despite our best efforts it is only at his coming that the world will be put right. Influenced by Adorno and Horkheimer he is conscious that actions are often dialectical. We try to do good but in doing so there are unintended and unforeseen negative effects. Yet act we must. We act because a “passionate expectation of the day of the Lord” awakens us from a state of perpetual reflection to a following of Christ that has an awareness of the end and thus the judgement of Matthew 25. Finally, we rediscover the prophetic and apocalyptic language to speak to a world that despite “its cries, catastrophes, injustices and examples of inhumanity dispenses the sweet poison of evolutionary progress and ...the illusion of incessant growth, and thus makes everyone insensible and unreceptive to the real extent of anxiety”<sup>393</sup>. We are called to make clear this ‘illusion’ not merely in proclamatory words but by action, which takes the specific form of solidarity with those who suffer, solidarity with the victims and vanquished of history. To pray, to follow, to speak and act prophetically exposes us to the danger that in following Christ we shall meet the fate he did, and that to follow him really shall mean to pick up our cross and suffer with him, even to the point where we feel forsaken by God.

#### Metz as a theologian of the Cross.

Having established Christ’s cry from the cross as central to Metz’s theology we may describe him as doing a type of theology of the cross. This term,

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<sup>392</sup> See, Metz, *FC*, pp. 76 – 81.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

theology of the cross, has in many respects become synonymous with Lutheran theology. Indeed in chapter 2 we noted the influence upon Metz's thought by prominent Lutheran thinkers Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard and have already in this chapter turned to Bonhoeffer to aid us in understanding Metz. We also noted his adoption of theological categories more normally associated with Lutheran or Reformed theology than traditional Roman Catholic theology. We may therefore say he has something of a Lutheran sensibility about his theology and may even apply the Lutheran term 'theologian of the cross' to him.

Our understanding of his theology of the cross and how he understands god-forsakenness is therefore aided if we hold him up to the light of Luther. This is not to claim that Metz is following Luther, but to make a more modest claim, that given his affinity with Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard we can in reading Luther and Metz side by side see certain similarities and discrepancies. For example, we see a similarity between Luther's assertion that knowledge of God only comes through suffering and the cross and Metz's focus on knowing God through following Jesus and his challenge for us to tarry at the cross and hear Christ's cry so this may act upon our understanding of who God is.

Of all Luther's writings it is his *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518 that most authoritatively sets out what a theologian of the cross is <sup>394</sup>. To guide our reading of the Disputation we follow Gerhard Forde's assessment, which we sympathetically modify in light of other scholarship.

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<sup>394</sup> Forde, Gerhard., *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518*, Michigan : Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997, p. 19.

Within the 1518 disputation it is theses 19 – 24 that specifically outline what it means to be a theologian of the cross in contrast to being a theologian of glory. At the heart of this section of the disputation is an epistemological claim regarding our ability to know God rightly. The assertion made by Luther is that God can only be known through “the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross”<sup>395</sup>. Metz’s rejection of speculative and scholastic theological method and his prioritising of practical reason means his theology is attentive to the ‘visible and manifest things of God’. For Metz, God is supremely understood through ‘suffering and the cross,’ hence his emphasis on Christ’s cry of god-forsakenness.

Luther’s epistemological claim rests on the anthropology Luther delineates in the previous theses. Namely, that human works, though they seem “attractive and good,” hinder humankind in their quest for righteousness<sup>396</sup>. Luther taught that we are in the vice-like grip of a “free will’ that in its “active capacity” can only do that which is evil<sup>397</sup>. There is, in this view, within us no capacity for good, so we must relinquish our attempts to do good, and in humble submission accept the grace of Christ.

While Metz does not seem to be so pessimistic regarding our ability to do good he does emphasise that what the bourgeois subject and bourgeois society

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<sup>395</sup> Luther, *HD.20*, 1518.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, *HD.3*.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, *HD.13* – 15.



may call good and acceptable dialectically harms and does evil to those who are not part of that society. For Metz, then, the good we do is tainted by the sinful structures of this present age. There is also a connection between Luther's anthropology and the need for the righteousness of God "imparted by faith" to work upon us and Metz's emphasis on our need to put on Christ and live in obedience to the Father's will<sup>398</sup>. Yet, further to our comments that Metz does not sufficiently explicate how we are empowered to follow Christ, there is a danger a Metzian solidarity with the poor and oppressed becomes mere 'human works', merely a form of liberal-humanitarianism. Luther's admonishments cause us to reflect upon this and whether works are pursued in a quest to gain righteousness or as an outworking of the grace we have received and continue to receive as we act in obedience to the will of God. Luther thus challenges us to ask, do we work from a theology of the cross or a theology of glory?

Luther's distinction between the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross is, therefore, not simply an epistemological one. According to thesis 21: "A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is"; it is also a proclamatory one<sup>399</sup>. Without right knowledge about God and thus about the structure of reality, we proclaim that which is evil good and that which is good evil. Metz takes up this proclamatory tone with his challenge to the sanctification of contemporary technological and economic reasoning that dominates modern politics. He thinks we are calling that which is evil good

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<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, HD. 26.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, HD. 21.

because we do not know God rightly. To know God rightly is to hear the cry of Christ from the cross, which opens our eyes to those suffering around us. Failure to know God rightly means we fall short in understanding the human person rightly – we are unaware that we are enslaved to a false consciousness, the bourgeois consciousness, from which we need liberated.

Metz's emphasis on Christ's god-forsakenness at the cross leads in our opinion to an understanding that assumes and expects God's absence in the midst of suffering. We would, however, be wrong to describe this as what Luther meant by *Deus absconditus*. It is our argument that god-forsakenness should be understood in terms of Luther's conception of *Deus absconditus* rather than Metz's proposal of substantive absence.

As we have stressed, central to Luther's theology of the cross is the claim that God is only visible as "seen through suffering and the cross"<sup>400</sup>. This counterintuitive sight means that God is hidden to the wisdom of humankind. As St. Paul instructs the church at Corinth, "the world through its wisdom did not know" God, and a principle reason for this must surely be that God's demonstration of who he is in Jesus Christ looked just the opposite of what the human imagination would conceive a god to be (1 Cor. 1:21). The God whom we encounter at the cross, the God revealed to us in the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ is *Deus absconditus*. He is the God who

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<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, HD.20.

reveals himself hidden in the midst of a world and in the middle of human existence that “has been bent out of shape by the human fall”<sup>401</sup>.

It may be, and has been argued by Loewenich, that Luther’s doctrine of the hidden God evolves to the degree whereby hiddenness comes to mean real absence. In his *Bondage of the Will* hiddenness can indeed mean absence. Such a shift denotes not just a change in what hiddenness means, but a transformation from an epistemological category to a metaphysical one. However, it is our contention that “the decisive key” to understanding the “central insights” of Luther’s doctrine of *Deus absconditus* is to be found in the *Heidelberg Disputation*<sup>402</sup>. It is in this disputation that Luther’s theology of the cross finds its most fundamental expression and thus we afford to it a priority for how the theology of the cross should be understood, and for how we shall view God’s hiddenness. It is therefore to the understanding of *absconditus* as hiddenness found there that we appeal.

We are therefore able to state that for Luther God’s hiddenness does not equate with God’s absence. God is present, but because in the vanity of our human reason we, like the Magi of the nativity story, seek him in the glory, splendour, and power of a royal palace, he is hidden to us and we cannot find him. The hidden God is the God born in a manger. The hidden God is revealed in the paradoxical terms of the incarnation, “who, being in the very nature God

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<sup>401</sup> Kolb, Robert, *Luther on the Theology of the Cross*, in *Lutheran Quarterly*, ns 16, No. 1, 2002, p. 449

<sup>402</sup> Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions*, Oregon : Pickwick Publications, 2008, p. 6.

...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phil 2:6-7). “The hidden God is none other than the crucified God”<sup>403</sup>.

Robert Kolb puts it well when he says that *Deus absconditus* means “God beyond our grasp,” grasp meaning God beyond our control or making, but also beyond our comprehension<sup>404</sup>. We cannot grasp how God can be God and yet suffer and die upon a cross. God in demonstrating that he is beyond and outwith our grasp, refuses to be named by Moses and so, likewise, it is not we who grasp God, but God who grasps us<sup>405</sup>. To assert that God is beyond our grasp is simultaneously a statement true of metaphysics, phenomenology, and practical reason. As Luther instructs us in his *Heidelberg Disputation* we cannot “look upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible,” thus metaphysical statements about the ‘inner-life’ of the Trinity must be modest in light of this truth. However, our phenomenological perception of God’s absence or reasoned conclusion that God must be absent because of events in history also grasps at defining that which is beyond our grasp. We contend that we should therefore talk of God’s hiddenness rather than absence. God has promised to neither leave the individual believer, the community of believers gathered or dispersed as his church, nor creation which He is redeeming.

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<sup>403</sup> Loewenich, Walter von, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, Augsburg : Fortress Publishing, 1976, p. 30.

<sup>404</sup> Kolb, *Op. cit.*, p. 453.

<sup>405</sup> We understand the ability to name as tied to the link between Adam having dominion over creation and his naming the animals. That God eschews Moses’s request to tell him his name (Ex. 3: 13- 14) is God’s refusal to be named and thus come under man’s dominion.

To talk of hiddenness rather than absence is not to downplay the confusion and pain that may be experienced when it is felt that God is missing. Be it Thérèse of Lisieux, Julian of Norwich, or more recently Thomas Merton, there is a long tradition of Christian mystics who have experienced both an intensity of God's presence (consolations), and 'desolations', feelings of God's absence. Bauerschmidt notes that the general advice of these mystics is not to put "too much store" in either consolation or desolation, but to cling faithfully to God<sup>406</sup>. Pastoral sensitivity is required both at the inter-personal and political level when reflecting upon such feelings of absence, especially when they are linked to traumatic events, be that the death of a child or the murder of the Jewish people in the holocaust. To say that there is a deeper truth of God's presence – albeit hidden – in these feelings of absence is not to denigrate or dismiss those feelings of absence. We cannot explain or give reason to this hiddenness of God, but in humble faith and trust say with the prophet Isaiah, "Truly you are a God who hides himself" (Is. 45: 15). To speak of God's hiddenness is in our opinion not just more theologically accurate or biblically faithful, but carries within it a seed of hope absence cannot. While a people who experience absence may hope for the return of the one who has abandoned them, in the in-between-time they have no hope in their present circumstances except their own resourcefulness. On the other hand hope during God's hiddenness is not hope deferred, hope for when we see Him, but hope that in His hiddenness He is already working for our good to outwork His purposes.

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<sup>406</sup> Bauerschmidt, Frederick, *Why the Mystics Matter*, Notre Dame : Sorin Books, 2003, p. 33.

## Victims or Sinners?

We noted above Luther's pessimistic anthropology that emphasises our sinfulness. The question arises as to how his emphasis on the human subject as "sinner" sits with Metz's category of "victim". This category of victim, which Metz contrasts with that of victor, is an important element of his theological critique of modernity. As we have encountered elsewhere with Metz his categories often take the form of the specific and the general. This is also the case with his category of victim. With his specific category of victim he refers to those who experienced Auschwitz, which by extension includes the other Nazi concentration and death camps, and the internment of Jews during WWII in ghettos<sup>407</sup>. Indeed he summarises in part his project for us when he states, "political theology here in Germany wants to make the cries of the *victims* from Auschwitz unforgettable in Christian theology"<sup>408</sup>. His more general use of the category of victim arises from the remembrance of suffering, hence:

Remembering suffering compels us to look upon the public *theatrum mundi* not only from the perspective of the ones who have made it and arrived, but also the vanquished and the victims<sup>409</sup>.

Thus, he contrasts the dominant narrative of society as history governed by and for the successful, the victors and the powerful with history from the standpoint of those who have suffered to create and maintain such success: the vanquished and the victim. We must, living under the hegemony of this dominant narrative, learn to see the world from this alternative perspective. Metz understands the

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<sup>407</sup> See Metz, *Theology and Theodicy*, in *PG*, p. 55.

<sup>408</sup> Metz., *PG*, p. 27.

<sup>409</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 108.

Christian gospel as the means and promise for the redemption and liberation of the vanquished and victims of the history of suffering in our world. The message of Christianity is from this perspective a “particular history of freedom: a freedom based on the redeeming liberation by God in the cross of Jesus” leading to a solidarity with and for those who suffer. Metz’s use of the word freedom in this context is a deliberate challenge to Modernity’s claim that it is the bastion and paragon of freedom.

The freedom Modernity promises is a false freedom in which we become slaves to the anonymous pressures and dominion of systems of exchange, technology and market forces to name but a few of the powers that enslave. Thus, while Metz wants us to recognise that we in the West are primarily the victors in the history of our world, he also concedes that we are victims. He states, “[W]e Christians in this country must live with the suspicion of being oppressors, if perhaps oppressed oppressors”<sup>410</sup>. This last statement is reminiscent of comments made by his friend and fellow exponent of a liberative political theology, Jürgen Moltmann. He, like Metz, emphasises victimhood as a category, drawing attention not just to the poor and oppressed of the developing world, or former European colonies upon which much of our wealth has been built, but states that we in the West are “oppressed oppressors or victimised perpetrators”<sup>411</sup>.

Undoubtedly, in drawing our attention to the presence of victims and the vanquished in history, Metz and Moltmann are saying something important.

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<sup>410</sup> Metz, *FF*, p. 26.

<sup>411</sup> Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, London : SCM Press, 2000, p. 188.

This is particularly so given a backdrop of Hegelian or neo-Hegelian concepts of progress and the sublation of suffering in history as it moves towards the realisation of the Absolute. We cannot circumvent or justify in the name of progress or some other utilitarian ideal the history of suffering. The blood of the victims and vanquished in history cries out and cannot nor must not be silenced (Gen. 4:10, Rev. 6:9-10). Only God can bring the consolation, vindication and justice that heals the wounds of this cry. It is our contention that in God's hidden work in the cross such consolation, vindication and justice has already broken into human history in the inauguration of the heavenly kingdom on earth by Christ, and continues to work in history. As followers of Christ we are called to witness to this and thus must not be deaf to the cries of those who suffer, and have suffered in the past, and like blind Bartimaeus son of Timaeus cry out, "Son of David, have mercy on me" (Mk. 10:46 - 52).

In observing the common currency of the language of victimhood Forde comments, "we apparently are no longer sinners, but victims, oppressed by sinister victimisers whom we relentlessly seek down and accuse"<sup>412</sup>. Luther's disputation, and his emphasis on our inability to do good without the grace of God, reminds us that we are never merely victims, or oppressed oppressors or even victimised perpetrators. We are sinners and members of a sinful human race who stand in need before a God of grace who in his great mercy accepts us as his children. There is, thus, a danger within the liberative paradigm of Metz with its emphasis on the victim, that we succumb to the temptation to be

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<sup>412</sup> Forde, *Op. cit.*, p. ix.



theologians of glory and not theologians of the cross. A theologian of the cross is all too aware of their status as a sinner and their need of God, their need to “put on Christ”.

We do not, however, need to set the categories of victim and sinner in opposition to each other. We have all sinned and fall short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23); this is our basic starting point. Yet, if we are to repent of our sins and follow Jesus, we need to acknowledge we are sinners who by acts both deliberate and of omission have sinned against others and that there are victims of these actions<sup>413</sup>. Moreover, Metz’s language describing those who live in the West as oppressed oppressors alerts us to the reality that we also live in and under systems of life and belief that are hostile to the kingdom of God and are antithetical to the righteousness, peace and joy of the kingdom (Rom. 14:17). Standing firm in God’s grace, resisting these powers is a stance which not only seeks our own liberation from the powers but also actively seeks the liberation of those who are even more than we, also dominated and oppressed by these powers. Nevertheless, implied in any liberation of the victim as a subject capable of agency, must be the consciousness of the victim’s own responsibility. So long as we take all the responsibility for the victim, the victim can never truly be free. The victim must become aware for himself of the truth of the universal falling-short of God’s glory, if he is to cease being a victim. Metz’s understanding of a subject as one-who-is-capable-of-agency means that his category of victim does

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<sup>413</sup> By stating that we have sinned against others by acts deliberate and of omission we are including apathy and passivity as an act, we are including a not doing something as an act.

not envision others taking responsibility for the victim, but in taking responsibility for our own actions we help create the conditions where the victim can become a subject capable of agency and thus responsibility. Therefore, at least implicitly, by taking up Metz's category of victim and his themes of guilt and responsibility, which we shall consider further in chapter 7, an argument can be made that our understanding of what it is to be a sinner must include a concept of victim. This allows us to understand a movement of self-understanding from the status of victim to the status of sinner, in which the status of sinner is an important stage in being liberated. In awareness of our need of God's grace because we know ourselves to be sinful we also cry out to God as, and on behalf of, victims, "Maranatha, come Lord Jesus".

#### *Leiden an Gott.*

Of great importance to Metz's theology of the cross and his understanding of suffering is his concept of *Leiden an Gott*. He states that his

theology understands the Yes to God in history as a *suffering from God* [*Leiden an Gott*] that in the end reaches the suffering of abandonment by God that has become unforgettable to us in Jesus' cry from the cross<sup>414</sup>.

We now turn our attention to explaining this phrase *Leiden an Gott* and in doing so draw some conclusions from what we have previously discussed regarding abandonment and suffering.

Perhaps the first comment to make regarding the unusual German construction of this phrase is its uniqueness to Metz and the difficulty in

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<sup>414</sup> Metz, *Unterwegs zu einer nachidealistischen Theologie*, p. 220 (Emphasis Mine). In Bauer (ed.), Johannes B., *Entwürfe der Theologie*, Verlag : Styria, 1985.

translating it into English. Indeed, given the difficulty in conveying Metz's intention and the meaning of the phrase if it is translated into English, we shall on the whole make reference to it in the German. In German *Leiden an* is how you would commonly describe suffering from an illness, and is not a common phraseology to describe our relationship to God, or God's relationship to us. A literal translation to English would be "suffer from God," or perhaps "suffer under God". One prominent translator of Metz's work has chosen to translate this phrase as "suffering unto God" in order to "avoid the passive connotation of suffering 'from' something"<sup>415</sup>. However, Metz himself helps us understand his intention with this phrase. In a comment on what he means by *Gottespassion* he states:

I often use the phrase 'God passion' [*Gottespassion*]. I understand it as an objective genitive, that is, as a passion for God and a suffering unto God [*Leiden an Gott*], but not in the sense of a subjective genitive, that is, not a suffering God<sup>416</sup>.

Here Metz helps us in a number of ways. Firstly, both here and elsewhere *Leiden an Gott* is used as a contrast to and of *Leiden in Gott*. This is clear if we quote him in German:

Im Unterschied zu maßgeblichen und einflußreichen zeitgenössischen Theologien kennt dieser Entwurf zwar, wie gesagt, ein, „Leiden *an* Gott“, aber er kennt nicht eigentlich ein „Leiden *in* Gott“ oder ein „Leiden zwischen Gott und Gott“<sup>417</sup>.

In his discourse on suffering Metz with his playful contrast of *Leiden an Gott* with *Leiden in Gott* emphasises his distinction from the "new orthodoxy" of divine

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<sup>415</sup> Ashley, *A Passion for God*, p. 117 fnt. 19.

<sup>416</sup> Metz in Schuster, Ekkehard, & Boschert-Kimming, Reinhold, *Trotzdem Hoffen*, Mainz : Matthias Gründewald, 1993, p. 54.

<sup>417</sup> Metz, *UNT*, p. 220

suffering<sup>418</sup>. We noted briefly in chapter 3 his critique on such views of suffering. Here we add to what we said at that point by stating he is concerned as to how such a doctrine might redefine what suffering is and how it impacts upon our understanding of the human subject who suffers. He is concerned that these contemporary Trinitarian considerations of God and suffering propose solutions to the problem of suffering, and as we know from our consideration of his approach to theodicy, this is not a question we can answer or a problem we can solve.

The Hegelian elements he detects in the talk of a suffering God, upon which we have already commented, imports a “historicity of God” into theology and our understanding of the world and suffering<sup>419</sup>. Such historicity and the sublation of the history of human suffering into a “theological dialectic of Trinitarian soteriology” results in the loss of the historical character of human suffering<sup>420</sup>. Human suffering becomes a process that is a function of the Trinitarian history of God and loses its character as suffering that has actually occurred to someone at some place at some time.

What then may we say as a positive explanation of this phrase, *Leiden an Gott*? It is very much linked with his Christology which we examined earlier. He comments that he has shown in *Zeit der Orden*? incisively “in what way it is precisely Jesus’ passion that can be qualified as a suffering unto God, and how

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<sup>418</sup> Goetz, Ronald, *The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy*, in *The Christian Century* 103, No. 13, April, 1986, p. 385.

<sup>419</sup> Metz, *FHS*, p. 127.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid*.

this is a thoroughly Christological qualification”<sup>421</sup>. He, however, leaves the reader free to interpret what this ‘Christological qualification’ in *ZO* is. From our reading of Metz it is our contention that it is Christ’s obedience to the Father, which qualifies what *Leiden an Gott* means. He states:

Jesus’ suffering was a suffering from God [*Leiden an Gott*], and of his powerlessness in the world, and the radicalness of his obedience. His yes [to God] is measured by the extent of this suffering<sup>422</sup>.

It is this obedience that ultimately leads to Christ’s cry from the cross and so *Leiden an Gott* is intrinsically linked to prayer.

Obedience, Metz argues, is both mystical and political. Given he also states this about his political theology, then we can take from this common description that his political theology is deeply informed by his notion of christological-obedience. In other words, his political theology is deeply informed by Christ’s cry from the cross, a point we have already established. Obedience is mystical in that it is an expression of our love and worship of God. As such it includes prayer, but not just in its positive aspects, but in its negative manifestation as a crying out and questioning of God. It is our ‘yes’ to God in the midst of suffering that rejects any consolation offered by myths or to be found from the powers. It is a yes to God in the midst of suffering that forsakes Him not and actively waits for His consolation. It is thus connected to his concept of poverty of Spirit<sup>423</sup>. In explaining this mysticism of *Leiden an Gott* he quotes Romano Guardini as saying on his deathbed: “Why, God, the dreadful

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<sup>421</sup> Metz, *UNT*, fnt 16., p. 232.

<sup>422</sup> Metz, *ZO*, p. 68.

<sup>423</sup> See Metz, *TT*, p. 114.

detour on the way to Heaven, the suffering of the innocent, why sin”<sup>424</sup>. This is prayer as a “passionate questioning of God” as holding onto God even if we experience God-forsakenness<sup>425</sup>. In crying out for God, in holding firm to him and waiting for his consolation our suffering *is* an anticipation, an expectation *for* God that is as of yet unfulfilled. In this sense it is a suffering *towards* God, a suffering of longing for the one whom we love yet experience his absence.

This suffering from God is also political; it is not merely a questioning of God for our salvation but it is an “open-eyed mysticism that obligates us to perceive more acutely the suffering of others”<sup>426</sup>. Our expectation and longing is not just that we would receive God’s consolation but it is for the other whom we recognise as a neighbour in need of God’s love and care to relieve and banish their suffering.

Having categorised Metz as doing a theology of the cross the question arises as to whether Luther’s theology might complement or add to the description of *Leiden an Gott* above? It is our judgement that Luther’s theology of the cross, in which discipleship is marked by the human struggle with sin, has a contribution to make with regards to our understanding of *Leiden an Gott*. Metz, however, may be concerned that our contribution via Luther distracts from the suffering of others and offers a form of cheap consolation. This is only a danger

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<sup>424</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 68.

<sup>425</sup> Metz, *TT*, p. 114

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid*.

if we allow our reflection to become detached from Metz's consideration and his emphasis on the conversion of bourgeois man.

The contribution to the concept of *Leiden an Gott*, which can be developed from Luther's theology of the cross, is a rebalancing of what suffering comes to mean in Metz's thought. There is the potential that Metz's focus on Christ's cry and abandonment as the absence of God leads to suffering being narrowly defined as god-forsakenness. We therefore seek to complement Metz so suffering is not narrowly defined in this way and the theme abandonment does not become hegemonic. Luther's theology gains its hermeneutical strength to steer us away from this narrowing by conceiving of our presence before God and his judgement upon us in the cross. Judgement here is not limited to its negative orientation of condemnation, but speaks of the fullness of God's pronouncement on humankind that includes the negative condemnation of humankind as sinners and the positive salvific movement of God's justification of humankind.

To stand in the presence of God before the cross of Christ is to become aware of ourselves not merely as victims, but helpless as sinners in need of God who graciously justifies and saves us by his loving grace. There is within this an aspect of *Leiden an Gott*. We "suffer the absolute and unconditional working of God upon us"<sup>427</sup>. In seeing Jesus helpless upon the cross we glimpse something of our helplessness as we "are rendered passive by the divine activity"<sup>428</sup>. Our eyes are opened to ourselves as *homo absconditus*. We, like Jesus' disciples, flee

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<sup>427</sup> Forde, *Op. cit.*, p. ix.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*

from the cross as we do not want it to reveal and confront us with who we really are. The cross confronts us with God's assessment of us as sinners, the horror of the cross with the awfulness of the consequences of our sin. We have denied and hidden from God's judgement that we have sinned, and have hidden from the truth that we are sinners. At the cross a revelation takes place in which we see ourselves from God's perspective, sinners in need of salvation. It is with this perspective that we learn what it is truly to be human, to passively receive new life in Christ and thus our true human identity as a child of God.

Suffering God's loving work upon us is to experience a death, the death of the "old self" to sin (Rom. 6:1 -11). Nevertheless, while we may be "dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ" we know that there is an on-going battle with the sin that "so easily entangles us (Heb. 12:1). The Apostle Paul in particular teaches us that there is a battle between who we are in Christ and our old sinful fallen nature. Like him we often end up doing the very thing we hate, which leads us to despair and to cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7). This process we commonly call sanctification in which there is an on-going "putting to death" (Col. 3:5) that which is sinful so we may become like Christ.

To talk of suffering God's absolute and unconditional work upon us is to describe the conversion of the bourgeois consciousness we considered in chapter 2. If there Metz emphasised the public and relational change this conversion necessitates, then above we bring to the fore that this conversion requires a



change in and of the heart and not merely an attitudinal or relational change. To be converted is to live differently and this requires a change within that is mirrored by our external actions. To live differently is to invite God's working upon us and it is thus to suffer from God. Metz reminds us that following Christ is costly. To be a disciple is costly and our acceptance of God's love demands that this love is carried "into the lives of others – in some instances through" our own suffering and bearing of our sisters' and brothers' burdens<sup>429</sup>.

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<sup>429</sup> Kolb, *Op. cit.*, p. 458.

## Chapter 5.

### The Civic Humanist Response: Hannah Arendt.

Metz comments regarding his older compatriot, Hannah Arendt (1906 – 1975) that, she “has come to be seen as the theorist of politics strictly separated from religion on Modernity’s grounds”<sup>430</sup>. Her civic humanism thus represents a response to the failures of politics and modernity in Europe arising from a politics of unbelief. This chapter will outline Arendt’s political philosophy and will thus elucidate a vision of political life based on unbelief. This lays a foundation upon which we can build in our next chapter to our ‘headline disagreement’ described in Chapter 1 regarding the concerns of a politics of unbelief and the inclusion of suffering as a political concern.

It has been noted that Arendt’s work, and in particular her later work, reveals “the tyranny of Greece over Germany” in that she discloses something akin to an “idealization of the Greek polis”<sup>431</sup>. It is from this tradition of the Greek *polis* that her understanding of the *bios politicos* arises and informs her political categories and what she means by these. However, this reliance upon the political philosophy of antiquity is not mere nostalgia but allows Arendt to articulate concepts that assist her to critique modernity and the influence Christianity has had in forming the political sphere. Furthermore her rootedness in antiquity reminds us that to reflect upon politics is to engage with a tradition

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<sup>430</sup> Metz, *PG*, p. 139.

<sup>431</sup> Wrong, D.H., *The Modern Condition: Essays at a Century’s End*, Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 26, 33 – 4.

of thought. This is true whether one is reflecting as a secular philosopher or a Christian theologian. In particular she is concerned with the collapse of distinctions antiquity held for various forms of life, and for changes to their substance and meaning.

The first two categories that we must understand, as they underpin Arendt's philosophy, are nature and action. Everything else falls under these two basic headings. Under the heading of nature or natural we have labour: that which is concerned with the preservation of bodily life itself, and human associations that occur naturally, of which the 'household' is the preeminent form. Those activities and forms of life which fall under this heading of natural are said to belong to the "private life" of individuals, and the private sphere of the household, and family. Given tasks that are essential for the preservation of bodily life are 'natural', necessity as that which must be done to stay alive and preserve life belongs to this sphere and is thus a "pre-political phenomenon" belonging to the household<sup>432</sup>. Her thoughts on the political status of the household are of particular interest theologically given the New Testament description of believers belonging to the 'household of faith' (Gal. 6:10), and 'the household of God' (Eph. 2:19). This is an issue we shall return to in our consideration of the Church as *polis* in Chapter six. Our concern at this juncture is to establish why she views the household as pre-political.

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<sup>432</sup> Arendt, H., *The Human Condition* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 1998., p. 31.

## The Pre-political and the Political.

Both the *conditio sine qua non* (condition without which ‘it’ could not be), and the *conditio per quam* (condition through which) political life comes into being and is sustained are human plurality<sup>433</sup>. “Not man but men inhabit this planet. Plurality is the law of the earth,” Arendt firmly asserts<sup>434</sup>. Political life is not concerned with ‘man’ but ‘men’, with the “coexistence and association of different men” and is therefore based on the “fact of human plurality”<sup>435</sup>. Arendt argues that given households are constituted by kinship there is “no place within it for the individual, and that means for anyone who is different”<sup>436</sup>. Households, according to Arendt, do not contain the plurality she insists is the *conditio sine qua non* and the *conditio per quam* of all political life. The question arises, however, “What does Arendt mean by plurality?” The difference that constitutes plurality for Arendt is the difference of the life of the mind, the views one holds, and the freedom to candidly express this. The life of the mind is not simply consciousness: the appearance of the self to ‘myself’, which as such does not require the presence of another, but the appearance of ‘myself’ before the other through action and speech.

It is in acting and speaking that we ‘appear’ before others and in this way as an objective reality the life of the mind enters the political sphere. It is in our appearance before others that we enter into the sphere of plurality where “Being

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<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7, Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (Ed. Jerome Kohn), New York : Schocken Books, 2005, p. 93.

<sup>434</sup> Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, San Diego : Hardcourt Inc., 1976, 1977, 1978, p. 19.

<sup>435</sup> Arendt, *PP*, p. 93.

<sup>436</sup> Arendt, *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

and Appearing coincide”<sup>437</sup>. This appearance by way of action and speech needs the presence of another person and is synonymous with leaving the private sphere and entering into political life. So while members of the same household are different, or perhaps it is more accurate to say distinct in that they have their own being and individuality, there is a lack of freedom to express their differences from the head of the household, or master of the clan. To put it idiomatically, they are not free to speak their mind, and their will must submit to the rules of the household. This lack of freedom results in and from a lack of equality; equals are free to ‘speak their mind’, but those under the authority of a family head or the rule of a clan chief are not equal with the head or chief. This lack of freedom and absence of equality are two reasons why Arendt will not permit the household to enter the political sphere.

The lack of plurality in the household, which consigns it to the pre-political sphere, is in part the result of violence, which is the suppression of difference and freedom. Violence does not belong to politics but is pre-political and its presence in the household cannot be permitted into the political sphere for this would destroy both speech and equality and thus destroy freedom. Violence she avers not only makes “speech ...helpless,” but also is itself “incapable of speech,” of transcending physicality and participating in action and freedom<sup>438</sup>. As a more contemporary thinker has put it: “entry into language and renunciation of violence are often understood as two aspects of one and the

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<sup>437</sup> Arendt, *TLM*, p. 19.

<sup>438</sup> Arendt, *OR*, p. 9.

same gesture”<sup>439</sup>. Furthermore, she claims that the *oikos* was not only governed by force and violence but was “justified in this sphere because they are the only means to master necessity”<sup>440</sup>. That force and violence are necessary to ‘master necessity’ is a telling statement. It is this mastery of necessity that leads one to “become free,” and is achieved by “ruling over slaves”<sup>441</sup>. Her rejection of violence as a political act is therefore not that of a pacifist. Force and violence are merely disbarred from the space we call political, but as integral and constituent aspects of governing they are preliminary to politics proper in that they are foundational to the political sphere.

In ancient Greece the specific space for politics took a physical form, that of the *agora* of a *polis*. The boundary of the city created the distinct physical space in which one could be a citizen and as a citizen gather for council. Arendt, in her conception of the specific space that forms the political sphere, transcends the physicality of the *agora* and *polis*; she transcends place and substance. Politics need not be tied to a specific physical place, be that the ancient *agora* or a modern parliament. This is primarily because Arendt does not view politics as a ‘substance’ but as relationships; indeed, for her, politics is a “system of relationships established by action”<sup>442</sup>. The specific space of politics – the political sphere – “arises in what lies between men,” and must therefore be conceived of as the ‘space in-between’<sup>443</sup>.

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<sup>439</sup> Žižek, S., *Violence*, London : Profile Books, 2008, 2009, p. 52.

<sup>440</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 31.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> Arendt, *PP*, p. 162.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

That politics arises in an intermediary space “quite outside of man” is not automatic, reminding us that it is not a ‘state of nature,’ but an artifice of the human race<sup>444</sup>. Whenever people assemble, or merely live in proximity to each other so as to form a community, a “space is generated that simultaneously gathers” us “into it and separates” us “from one another”<sup>445</sup>. Thus, to talk, as Arendt does, of the private sphere and the public or political sphere is to talk of two spaces. What differentiates one space from the other is not so much physical location but the activities and characteristics of that space in contradistinction to the other spaces. Negatively each space is defined as not permitting the activities and characteristics of the other space. Positively understood the political space is that which is created between ‘men’ in their plurality, between equals who are free to act and speak. Yet our positive understanding cannot adequately account for the characteristics of this space without reference to the negative. We have already noted that plurality of persons is not the presence of more than one person: members in a household or barbarian clan do not have sufficient individuality in these contexts to appear in their plurality. Plurality only occurs in the assembly of equals and in a space free from violence. Equally, freedom is only properly understood when we include its negative form of freedom from the necessities of the private sphere of the *oikos* as well as its positive understanding as freedom to act and speak.

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<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

It is in her discussion of this space between men constituting the political sphere that Arendt introduces the ‘object’ of political concern. Politics is concerned “not for man” or men, but for the world<sup>446</sup>. The term ‘world’ requires interrogation, as to what it refers is often ambiguous. It may refer to the physical earth with or without reference to its inhabitants. It may also refer to a sphere of human activity, a domain or particular system, or way of life. Arendt is clear that she is not referring as such to the physical earth or universe, or even to the human race as constituting the world. The world is independent from human kind in that it exists before our birth and will continue to exist upon our death so often euphemistically described as our departure from the world. Yet as she rightly notes, “a world without human beings ...would be a contradiction in terms” in a way that a universe without human life would not<sup>447</sup>. While this goes some way to clarifying what she means when she states that “strictly speaking, politics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them,” we have not yet reached the nucleus of her understanding of ‘the world’<sup>448</sup>.

Her understanding of ‘the world’ is intrinsically tied to her project of reflecting upon totalitarian regimes as expressed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Indeed *The Promise of Politics* and *The Human Condition* are a continuation of her project to understand the evils that can occur under totalitarian conditions and positively describe a politics in which totalitarianism,

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<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.



or its lesser forms of dictatorship or despotism, cannot occur and flourish. The world only exists where there is a “plurality of standpoints”<sup>449</sup>. In a move indicative of a Kantian influence, Arendt states that the know-ability of reality is contingent upon this plurality of standpoints. A plurality of standpoints is required to “make reality even possible and to guarantee its continuation. In other words, the world comes into being only if there are [different] perspectives”<sup>450</sup>. Totalitarianism, by allowing only one perspective, quite literally destroys the world of politics. She notes: “[T]he end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective”<sup>451</sup>. Moreover, given “human beings in the true sense of the term can exist only where there is a world,” it is not *just* the world that is destroyed but also our humanity along with it. The loss of the world therefore represent a return to bestiality and a sub human existence.

Construing the household and its members as non-political by nature seems to be at odds with Aristotle, on whom she draws heavily, and the line from his *Politics* which everyone seems able to quote, “man is a political animal”<sup>452</sup>. For Arendt, humankind are not born as political beings, a concept she believes arises from a “fundamental misunderstanding” of Aristotle’s term *zōon politikon*, which must be understood by his other definition of man as a “*zōon logon ekhon* (‘a living being capable of speech’)”<sup>453</sup>. The view that ‘man’ is a

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<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>451</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 58.

<sup>452</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, I.2 (p. 60)

<sup>453</sup> Arendt, *Op. cit.*, p. 27. Arendt, *PP*, pp. 115 – 116.

political animal suggests that there is a permanent reality we call politics and that to live in *any* ordered group of people is the essence of politics. This, Arendt argues, is counter not just to Aristotle's understanding but all other Greeks of his period. "[H]e certainly did not think that all men are political or that there is politics, that is, a polis, no matter where people live"<sup>454</sup>. Rather, the Aristotelian claim that man is a social being discloses that politics *can* exist, but does not do so self-evidently, and in order to exist requires the organization of the polis to take a certain form. This understanding of politics thus excludes certain forms of 'living together' and chiefly excludes necessity as the *raison d'être* for life together. To live together from necessity is to eschew "something specifically human" and thus descend to a bestial form of life together as "animals, whose communal life, if they have such a thing, is a matter of necessity"<sup>455</sup>. She, however, does not in our opinion reflect sufficiently on questions regarding the comparability of bestial and human necessity. Therefore, without prejudicing our account of her political philosophy, we highlight at this juncture our intention to return to her concept of necessity and interrogate it critically. Nevertheless, in Arendt's vision of the political life it is our plurality, our ability and freedom to participate in speech and action in a 'space' free from the necessities of life that forms the specifically human activity that constitutes the political. This leads us to the second of her primary categories, action.

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<sup>454</sup> Arendt, *PP*, p. 116.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

Action.

In outlining Arendt's theory of action we approach the centre of her political thought, the axle from which her other concepts like the spokes of a wheel radiate and take their shape and meaning. As with most aspects of her thought this theory of action is multifaceted and complex, carrying with it areas of tension and perhaps even contradiction. However, given our aim at this juncture is merely to outline her thought, we shall not critically evaluate her theory here but shall undertake this task later.

Action is not simply activity and as such is distinguished from the activities of labour and work or fabrication (*poiesis*). Rather, action belongs to the sphere free from the necessities of life to which labour and work must attend. It not only belongs to this political sphere but is "the political activity par excellence" that constitutes the *bios politicos* from which "everything merely necessary or useful is strictly excluded"<sup>456</sup> It therefore occurs "directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter" and corresponds to the "human condition of plurality"<sup>457</sup>. This alerts us to the three central features of action to which we now turn our attention: freedom, speech, and plurality.

Freedom, as we have previously noted, is both 'from' something and 'to' or 'for' something. The above quote from Arendt clearly articulates that the freedom to act is freedom from the necessities required to sustain life. While this underpins her view of action, freedom, and indeed politics, it is not this aspect of

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<sup>456</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 9, p. 25.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

freedom that she stresses. By freedom Arendt primarily points towards the capacity to innovate: to begin something new and unexpected. Hence for Arendt action finds its supreme expression in natality, which she posits as “the central category of political thought”<sup>458</sup>. While undoubtedly she has in mind human birth, by making freedom a central feature of action, natality is raised above mere animal reproduction as action is the “*differentia specifica* of human beings”<sup>459</sup>. The entry into our world of a new human being is not always the result of a bestial or evolutionistic impulse to procreate. Choice, the decision to procreate or not, – which predates modern contraception and finds its ultimate expression in celibacy – is as far as we know a uniquely human capacity. But it is not on this aspect of natality Arendt focuses. For her the entry into our world of a new human being represents the potential appearance of an actor who may act in freedom as distinct from merely following the conventions and habits of behaviour, role, or function of the animal species of which it is a member. This freedom which natality brings is the potential to consent to or dissent from a particular state of affairs and thus speak and act freely before others, which means to appear as a political being. Hence, with each new human born there is the potential for the novel, unexpected, and unpredictable to occur. This brings her into agreement with the Western tradition of political thought that has followed Hobbes in insisting that political society is “created and preserved by human beings against the ruinous forces of nature and their own destructive

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<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9, p. 177.

<sup>459</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

tendencies”<sup>460</sup>. However, her concept of natality brings her into opposition with Hobbes’ thesis that morality is the source of political endeavour.

Arendt’s reaction to and preoccupation with the conditions of totalitarianism shape her understanding of action and the prominent place of natality within it. Thus her theory of action is not just a reaction to political thought shaped by a Burkean emphasis on custom and conventions, although it could be used to articulate this. Nor is it just a reaction to Hegalian inspired ideologies that conceive of history as a ‘flow’ and claim to “possess either the key to history, or the solution for all the ‘riddles of the universe’”<sup>461</sup>. Rather it seeks to articulate action *as* the realization of freedom even within the restraints of a totalitarian regime that through its domination of all spheres of life “aims at abolishing freedom”<sup>462</sup>. “Men are free ...as long as they act, neither before or after; for to be free and to act are the same”<sup>463</sup>. Totalitarian regimes, and to an extent dictatorial and authoritarian states, seek the “transformation of human nature itself,” of what it means to be human. Under these conditions people lose spontaneity, “man’s power to begin something new out of his own resources”<sup>464</sup>. Yet what was not destroyed even in totalitarian regimes that have occurred within history is the human capacity to start new life, and thus keep the possibility of the unexpected, unpredictable, and new alive. In this way freedom

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<sup>460</sup> Villa, Dana, *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 5.

<sup>461</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, San Diego : A Harvest Book, 1948, 1975, 1979, p. 159.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>463</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London : Penguin Classics, 1954, 2006, p. 153.

<sup>464</sup> Arendt, *OT*, p. 455.

is enacted even where there appears to be none. This capacity to act even in the most dire of situations means that circumstances, context, function, or role can never determine us absolutely.

The other important function that action undertakes, and again finds its supreme expression in natality, is the preservation of 'the world'. She states: "left to themselves, human affairs can only follow the law of mortality"<sup>465</sup>. Given the world of human affairs, the public sphere is constituted by our plurality and exists in the 'in-between' space; it assumes the temporality of the web of relationships that create and sustain it. Therefore:

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted<sup>466</sup>.

Action does not, however, find its only concrete expression in the birth of new human life. The concrete examples of action in our modern age Arendt gives are revolutions. Unlike natality, revolutions are not merely the potential of the new but are "the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problems of beginning"<sup>467</sup>. The 'problems' to which she alludes are unpredictability and irreversibility to which we shall return later. By making revolution an exemplar of action Arendt highlights two further important features of her theory of action. Firstly, action is related to the concept of heroic deeds and their remembrance. This discloses the expressive component of action. The doing of great deeds, the "passionate drive to show one's self in

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<sup>465</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 246.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>467</sup> Arendt, *OR*, p. 11.

measuring up against others” reveals the identity of the actor<sup>468</sup>. This revelation of identity is, she claims, unique to action for it discloses ‘who’ the actor is against ‘what’ as labour and work may reveal. Arendt states: “Action without a name, a ‘who’ attached to it, is meaningless, whereas an art work retains its relevance whether or not we know the master’s name”<sup>469</sup>. Yet the identity of the actor and the meaning of the act can only be fully made known retrospectively “to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants”<sup>470</sup>. The actor does not fully comprehend his own identity or the full meaning of his action.

As we noted earlier, action corresponds to the human condition of plurality, thus it is validated and judged by the different perspectives before whom our actions and therefore our self appears. Yet if our actions are to establish a lasting world they must take on a permanence that can resist the ravages of time and forgetfulness. What has been “seen, heard, and remembered” are primarily thoughts and ideas that are reified and transformed into “sayings of poetry ...into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents, and monuments”<sup>471</sup>. Remembrance, history, and storytelling thus form a central function in a process of constant reification “in order to sustain the world”<sup>472</sup>. Moreover, remembrance, history, and storytelling not only help sustain the world but create a “repository of instruction, of actions to be emulated as well as

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<sup>468</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p194.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180 – 1.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

deeds to be shunned”<sup>473</sup>. For Arendt, like Metz, communities of memory are an important feature of the wellbeing of the political community and the world it inhabits, given the “organization of the *polis* ...[requires] a kind of organized remembrance”<sup>474</sup>.

The foregoing highlights the importance of plurality to her theory of action. Returning to the quote with which we started this section we noted that action occurs “directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter”<sup>475</sup>. In other words Arendt is talking about language and primarily speech, as this is the medium by which we make our thoughts ‘visible’ to each other. She states in aphoristic fashion that, “[A]ction entails speech ...[and] speech entails action”<sup>476</sup>. The doer of deeds cannot simply transpose his thoughts onto a canvas in art or the written page of a book; this is for others to do in remembrance of the action. Fabrication merely reveals the ‘what’ of its maker but ‘who’ is not disclosed to us and the creator as a subject disappears. That which is produced by *techné* or *poiesis* will bear “the mark of the maker; but the maker is still subordinate to the end product” and therefore does not have the freedom that is constitutive of action<sup>477</sup>. Speech, Arendt contends, reveals the ‘who’, the subject that is the actor; thus “the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words”<sup>478</sup>.

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<sup>473</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>474</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 198.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>477</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>478</sup> Arendt, *Op. cit.*, pp. 178 – 9.



If our actions can disappear via forgetfulness and the entropy of time then the political sphere is a “highly fragile space”<sup>479</sup>. Thus her description of the political sphere as a *polis* is misleading in as much as, unlike the Greek city-state from which she draws so much inspiration, she does not envisage a physical space *per se* but uses the noun metaphorically.

The *polis*, ...is not the city-state in its physical location, ...[I]t is the sphere of appearance ...the space where I appear to others as others appear to me<sup>480</sup>.

Being a non-physical space it must in its fragility be continually recreated via action around common projects. It is in acting in concert around common public projects or a common political purpose that power comes into being. She states:

*Power* corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together<sup>481</sup>.

While this understanding of power is similar to the sovereignty of the people expressed by Locke or Rousseau, Arendt is no social contractarian. The coming together to act in concert is not a consequence of ‘contract’ but of common convictions established in the free and unrestricted sharing of thoughts and ideas. Her conception of common convictions comes from Montesquieu’s theory of the ‘principle of action’ and to his convictions of honour, virtue and fear, she adds fame, freedom, justice and equality<sup>482</sup>. The relationship of power to the public space is symbiotic and one cannot exist without the other.

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<sup>479</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>480</sup> Arendt, *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>481</sup> Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, San Diego : A Harvest Book, 1969, 1972, p. 143.

<sup>482</sup> Arendt, *PP.*, pp. 194 – 5.

As we noted earlier the meaning of the act can only be fully known retrospectively, and as such “[A]ction reveals itself fully only to the storyteller”<sup>483</sup>. The role given to the storyteller, who is one and the same as ‘the historian’, which in itself tells us something interesting regarding her view of history, exposes the narrative character of action. So while there is an element of unpredictability to action arising from our inability to foresee all the consequences of a particular act, Arendt lays the stress on narrative as the reason for unpredictability. Whatever “the character and content of the subsequent story may be, ... its full meaning can reveal itself only when it has ended”<sup>484</sup>. The end of a story is unpredictable when it is a lived story, for as an actor within this story we lack a transcendent perspective to see the beginning from the end and the puissance to determine the consequences and outcomes of our deeds towards their desired goal. This lack of perspective and power is not solely due to our inability to control events but results from the relational character of action and the political sphere. As an actor we are not alone but the essential plurality of the political sphere and public space means other actors are present not just as observers but as actors in their own right. Thus we are:

...never merely a ‘doer’ but always and at the same time a sufferer. To do and to suffer are like opposite sides of the same coin, and the story that an act starts is composed of its consequent deeds and sufferings<sup>485</sup>.

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<sup>483</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 192.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

The goal(s) of our action ‘suffer(s)’ from the deeds of other actors and face constant denigration from an ‘ends’ paradigm that seeks to impose a meaning from outwith the action<sup>486</sup>. This is the ‘problem’ of unpredictability.

Arendt’s concept of the ‘problem’ of irreversibility seems to sit at odds with her comments regarding the fragility of the political space and its need to be continually recreated. Notwithstanding this tension, by irreversibility Arendt seeks to differentiate between the ability to destroy that which has been fabricated by human kind, and “even the potential destruction of what man did not make – the earth and earthly nature,” and the chain of events that are set in motion by action<sup>487</sup>. The correlation between unpredictability and irreversibility arises from our inability to control or predict the consequences of action and our inability to halt or destroy these consequences.

These two problems of unpredictability and irreversibility require a remedy if we are to be able to act at all. Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves rightly notes that Arendt proposes the capacities of forgiving and promise as remedies to these problems<sup>488</sup>. However, his account leaves out a third remedy she proposed, that of law (*nomos*). These three remedies are of interest to us for they are important themes of Christian teaching and of political theology. This latter remedy of law is the weakest of the three, but seeks to address both problems,

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<sup>486</sup> See Arendt, *PP*, pp. 193 – 4 for her discussion of the difference and tension between ends and goals.

<sup>487</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 232.

<sup>488</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, pp. 80 -83.

whereas forgiveness addresses the issue of unpredictability and promise the issue of irreversibility.

We have already noted the correlation between our two problems: the unpredictability of the actor and his or her relationship to other actors means that unpredictability occurs as part of an unlimited expanding web of relationships that we cannot foresee or control. Arendt states that, “the *nomos* limits actions and prevents them from dissipating into an unforeseeable, constantly expanding system of relationships”<sup>489</sup>. Law therefore establishes boundaries and barriers between different political spheres. In doing so, the impetus of deeds done in one jurisdiction is immured to that jurisdiction. The barrier the law erects to the unpredictable and ever expanding reach of action is not however impenetrable. This is clear from Arendt’s own account of revolutions and the extent to which the deeds of one revolution inspire, influence, and direct the actions of those in another jurisdiction. The ability of the deeds of one revolutionary to animate others to action is not something Arendt considers as a ‘problem’ in itself. Revolutions are the political action *par excellence* as they create a new beginning. The role of law in this regard is to contribute to a limiting of the reach and unpredictability of such actions. Law also attaches itself to our second problem of irreversibility. She states that law by limiting the “expanding system of relationships ...gives actions their enduring form”<sup>490</sup>. Law therefore introduces to action a degree of predictability and fixity thus limiting it morphing into innumerable deeds. The fixity of action in law does not allow us

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<sup>489</sup> Arendt, *PP*, p. 187.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

to reverse action as such, to undo that which has been done, but it does allow us to revise the law which keeps action in check and in this way introduce a measure of control, but on its own it is insufficient to completely remedy either problem.

This insufficiency of law on its own to completely remedy the problems of action necessitates the requirement of her other remedies, “the power of promise and the power to forgive”<sup>491</sup>. These “two faculties belong together,” because irreversibility and unpredictability are two sides of the same coin<sup>492</sup>. Yet forgiving is focused as the remedy to irreversibility and the ability to promise as the remedy to unpredictability. The latent potentiality for action to reap unforeseen and unintended consequences is ripe. To act may be to start something new, but this action is always into an existing context, into an “already existing web of human relationships with ...innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions”<sup>493</sup>. This means the “action almost never achieves its purpose”, and given our lack of control we are not only impotent to ‘direct’ the action but we are impotent to stop the action or undo its deeds and subsequent deeds working in concert with our original action<sup>494</sup>.

Faced with the consequences of our action that we cannot undo Arendt avers that “our capacity to act, ...[would] be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover” and we would become and remain perpetual

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<sup>491</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>492</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 237.

<sup>493</sup> Arendt, *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*

“victims” of the consequences of our action<sup>495</sup>. In order not to be confined to this single action we require to be forgiven for the irreversible consequences of our action. Unable to forgive ourselves we require the presence of others – which is required for a deed to be an action anyway – to forgive us. It is questionable whether our actions have the degree of irreversibility Arendt suggests, and she is silent as to the processes and mechanics of forgiving in the concrete political sphere. It may be argued that a deed done to mitigate the consequences of a previous deed cannot be an action as it has its genesis in necessity, the need to act. But it is unclear to us how such a ‘need to act’ and the ‘need to forgive’ differ. Nevertheless, while we have concerns regarding Arendt’s view of forgiveness, concerns we shall detail later, we think she is right in including it as a capacity important to human wellbeing and the political sphere. For now we note that she credits Jesus of Nazareth for discovering “the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs”<sup>496</sup>. Her understanding of his reply to the Pharisees’ and scribes’ question, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Lk. 5:26) is central to her contention that the ability to forgive can be understood in “a strictly secular sense”. She argues that “Jesus maintains ...that it is not true that only God has the power to forgive” and that his power to forgive “does not derive from God”<sup>497</sup>. This reading allows her to assert that if Jesus’ power to forgive ‘upon earth’ did not derive from God so likewise our power to forgive ‘upon earth’ does not derive from God<sup>498</sup>. Moreover drawing on Matthew 18:35 and Mark 11:25 she states that it is the human person who must act first in forgiving. “Man

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<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

in the gospels is not supposed to forgive because God forgives and he must do 'likewise,' but 'if ye from your hearts forgive,' God shall do 'likewise'”<sup>499</sup>. We shall return to this reading of these texts in our next chapter; meantime we shall finish our account of her key concepts.

Arendt herself points to a problem for forgiveness within her theory. On the one hand it has the characteristics of a capacity fit for the political sphere, for like an action forgiveness is a new beginning. But it cannot be identical with an action for this would merely replicate the problems inherent in an action and thus become an anti-remedy rather than a remedy. It also, according to Arendt, 'contains' freedom, as forgiveness releases us from “vengeance” and an “automatism of the action process”<sup>500</sup>. Yet she states that “only love has the power to forgive,” which is a problem for her theory as love “is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical forces”<sup>501</sup>. Love is antipolitical because it negates the space between actors, the 'in-between', which is the space of the political. Does this then mean that forgiveness remedies action from outwith the political sphere? Arendt does not think so. The political principle that corresponds to the antipolitical moral category of love is respect. Respect retains the required concern for the person,

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<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239. Here she paraphrases Matthew 18:35 and Mark 11:23, which she footnotes and comments: “the power to forgive is primarily a human power” (p. 239 n77).

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

the ‘who’ of the action, and thus she believes it is “sufficient to prompt forgiving of what a person did, for the sake of the person”<sup>502</sup>.

Finally, we turn to the problem of unpredictability and the remedy of promise. Arendt believes “the power of stabilization inherent in the faculty of making promises” is less problematic than forgiveness as it does not arise from a “religious context”<sup>503</sup>. She immediately seems to contradict this by citing Abraham, and God’s Covenant with him, before swiftly moving on to the Roman legal system as the suitable heritage and grounding for our promise making. The faculty of promise making seeks to address two roots of the problem of unpredictability. As we have noted, an action discloses the identity of the actor by revealing the ‘who’ of the action. However, this revelation is not opaque to the actor and is known only with hindsight by the historian. Furthermore, with each new action something new about the ‘who’ of the actor is revealed, thus the identity of the actor shifts. Promise making therefore seeks to stabilize the “basic unreliability of men who never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow”<sup>504</sup>.

The second root giving rise to the problem of unpredictability we have encountered before, that is the impossibility of predicting the consequences of any action. This flows from our unreliability of identity and this issue is amplified when we act in concert. Given the political space must be free from

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<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.



violence, coercion, and rule, a uniformity or fixity of identity cannot be enforced from above or from outwith the action itself. Rather the agreement to live and act together in a public space – and thus of acting and speaking together - means the power of promise arises with or beside the action itself. Promise keeping is therefore the “force” that binds those who “act in concert” together<sup>505</sup>. Importantly for Arendt’s theory this agreement is mutual, thus preserving the equality and freedom of those concerned.

### Society and the Hegemony of the Social.

As we have seen, Arendt sharply distinguishes between two spheres of life. The private sphere arises out of nature and comprises the household, work, labour and those activities whose chief concerns are economic and the provision of the necessities required for sustaining life. The other sphere is the political sphere and most of our attention in this chapter has been taken with understanding this sphere, given it arises from action. She states:

The distinction between a private and public sphere of life corresponds to the household and political realms, which have existed as distinct, separate entities at least since the rise of the ancient city-state<sup>506</sup>.

This separation of the two spheres which she believes is essential to the well-being of our common world together and our private life, has been shattered, according to her thesis, by the rise of a “relatively new phenomenon whose origin coincided with the emergence of the modern age and which found its

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<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

political form in the nation-state”<sup>507</sup>. This new phenomenon of which she speaks is society, and the social realm.

This new sphere of society does not sit alongside, or between, the public and private, but invades both, bringing about the “simultaneous decline of the public as well as the private realm”<sup>508</sup>. We say that society invades both the public and private realms, but we would be more faithful to Arendt’s theory if we stated that with the rise of the social the private invades the public realm. In this ‘going public’ of the private realm both categories collapse with the result that it is not just the public realm that is damaged by the admittance of concerns Arendt does not regard as properly political, but the distinction between private and public concerns becomes so blurred that we no longer properly know what authentically should belong to the private realm.

D’Entrèves comments that, “by the ‘social’ Arendt means the expansion of economic activities to the point where they become the central political concern of a society”<sup>509</sup>. O’Donovan similarly notes that Arendt seemed “somewhat hypnotized by the household as the paradigm alternative to public engagement, characterizing it wholly negatively in terms of consumption”<sup>510</sup>. Given the rise of the social is the going public of the household, her view of the social is dominated by economics and consumption; thus “activities connected

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<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>509</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>510</sup> O’Donovan, O., *The Ways of Judgement*, Grand Rapids : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005, p. 56.

to the necessities of life” come to dominate and direct governmental energies and dominate and shape political life<sup>511</sup>. Attendant on this are concerns that politics and governance are reduced to administration and bureaucracy, and the political is reduced to mere technique and efficiency. This is not to say that good governance does not need efficient and technically competent administration; it does. Arendt’s point is to stress that within political life governance should not be reduced to technocracy or administrative efficiency. To do so is to do away with speech and action and in particular judgment and the ability to do something new.

While we are sure that D’Entrèves is right to highlight the link between the rise of the ‘social’ and the increasing role that necessity has played within the political sphere, and that O’Donovan rightly asserts that Arendt viewed the household primarily in terms of consumption, we are concerned that these statements about Arendt’s view of the social are unduly narrow in that the social is reduced to the economic. It is not just economics that have commandeered the social sphere, but it is all the activities of the household and the private sphere that have invaded this space. Therefore, Arendt charts with much concern a history of politics in which the norms of the household or clan, where there is a ruler and those who are ruled, become the norms of the political sphere with the rise of the social. She is also concerned that pre-political activities such as violence, and violence writ large in the form of war, also commandeer the political sphere via the hegemony of the social and the going public of the private.

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<sup>511</sup> D’Entrèves, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

Her understanding of the political turns the Clausewitzian “war is the extension of politics by other means” upon its head<sup>512</sup>. War in her understanding of the political is antithetical to freedom. The understanding of politics as the relationship between the ruled and the ruling, and the organization of life together under a ruler or ruling elite, is antithetical to the other cornerstone of her understanding of the political sphere – equality.

The admittance of the concerns of the household creates a “hybrid realm,” in which “private interests assume public significance”<sup>513</sup>. This hybrid realm, the social, is in reality a third realm and given Arendt posits that there are only two realms, the private and the political, this is problematic. The rise of the social to its hegemonic dominance brings with it the other concerns of the household and its pre and anti-political activities. Ruled and ruling, violence, pity, compassion, and love all enter the public space via society and in the process destroy the ‘in-between’ space where politics exists. Indeed for Arendt politics has existed only rarely throughout history. Moreover, given the “private realm of the household was the sphere where the necessities of life ...were taken care of and guaranteed” the going public of the private sphere as society means that necessity enters the political sphere amended by the social. It is to this problem of necessity that we shall turn in our next chapter.

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<sup>512</sup> We paraphrase Clausewitz here for brevity, drawing upon the following quote, “We see, therefore, that war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means”. Clausewitz, *On War* (Trans. Colonel J.J. Graham), Brownstone Books, (1832), 2009 1:24.

<sup>513</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 35.

Before leaving this introduction to Arendt's thought to focus on the issue of necessity in our next chapter we shall briefly make some critical comments. We noted that Arendt resolutely asserts political life is concerned with 'men' but not 'man'. This understanding of the political alerts us to a tension between the thought of Arendt and Metz. The latter is at pains to treat the individual as a subject, and therefore he or she must not get lost – be obscured from our gaze – in the mass of generalization and the anonymity of universal statements about 'men' and humankind. Metz is therefore concerned about 'man', woman and child, not 'men' or humanity in general. Perhaps Arendt is therefore right when she states that theology and philosophy cannot answer the question "What is politics?" given their concern is with "man" and not "men"<sup>514</sup>? We shall not seek to answer for philosophy, but notwithstanding Metz's concerns, to say that theology is only concerned with 'man' and not 'men' is to fail to understand God's calling of a people, of God's redemptive purposes as revealed in his election of Israel and the 'calling out' of the Church. Where God does 'call man' as an individual subject this is not in isolation from the plurality of humankind.

Abraham is perhaps the example *par excellence* of an individual called by God but with the plurality of humanity clearly in view. Indeed, even where God 'calls' a specific community of people in distinction from other peoples, the 'other' is included in the goal of calling the distinct people. So in Genesis 12 the 'call of Abram' – who has not yet changed his name to Abraham – ends with the

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<sup>514</sup> Arendt, *HC.*, p. 93.

promise that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”, (Gen. 12.3b). Even if we apply Arendt’s ‘rules’ that the family is pre-political and therefore not properly interested in the plurality of ‘men’, our point is not invalidated. In Chapter 17 of Genesis God calls Abram afresh: “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a *multitude of nations*”, (Gen. 17.5 *emphasis mine*). Here we see clearly that God’s call of an individual is related and purposed toward His concern for the plurality of humankind and that plurality is expressed in the political terms of nation(s). This is not to say that the call of the individual reduces him or her to a means to an end, in this case the establishment of a particular nation, and the blessing of all nations. Rather God’s concern for the individual and for the ‘plurality’ of ‘men’ in community is complementary. Theology contra Arendt is deeply concerned about ‘men’, about ‘man’ in his plurality in human community<sup>515</sup>. She wrongly understands theology on this matter – and as we shall see on other issues as well - and therefore views wrongly and negatively the contribution to political thought by Christianity.

Returning to her thoughts on household and plurality we are tempted to counter her exclusion from the political sphere of the household by pointing out that the household, particularly in antiquity, would have a plurality of persons within it. The household would not only have been made up exclusively of familial members but would have included servants and slaves who were also

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<sup>515</sup> The terms ‘men’ and ‘man’ are here inclusive of both men and women. To have employed a gender neutral term would have seemed contrived and stylistically at odds with Arendt’s use of the term ‘man’.

members of that household. Here we hit upon the problem of using the word plurality as a synonym for difference. A household is obviously made up of different persons, as we have noted, but the difference Arendt alludes to is not merely the difference of one person as distinct from another. For her the difference that assures plurality is the difference of the life of the mind and the ability to freely express this in speech. This, she avers, is not possible where the head of the house or the head of a clan rules, as the members of the household or clan must submit to this headship and conform to the views of the head. Arendt is surely right in highlighting that freedom to act may be restricted by a dominant and imposing head of a household.

She does not however consider elements of Christian discipleship that safeguard a freedom that facilitates plurality. We have in mind Christian obedience and prayer. Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul instruct believers to be obedient to those in authority over them. However, this obedience does not equate to a form of conformity in which the believers' ability to act in freedom and maintain their individuality over and against the one in authority is lost. Christ instructs those who would follow him to obey an authority who would force them to "go one mile" (Matt. 5:41). This refers to the practice where Roman soldiers would force people of their occupied lands to carry equipment for a mile. Yet, this obedience is a free response to this forceful authority as a second mile not demanded is travelled. In going this additional mile the dignity of one's agency was upheld, but also there is the acknowledgement of a higher and greater authority – the authority of God. Paul's instructions in Colossians

3:22 – 24 (Eph. 6:5 – 9) carry this same kingdom logic that we can freely obey earthly masters because what is done is “done for the Lord” and not for the master (Col. 3:22). Obedience to earthly masters is directed towards God in whom we find and know true freedom. Plurality within the household can, we argue, in this way be maintained.

Furthermore prayer, in which we include the singing of psalms and spiritual songs, has long been the form of free speech for oppressed people. From the Hebrew slaves in Egypt to slaves in North American cotton plantations a form of speech and thus freedom and plurality on Arendt’s terms between ruler and ruled has been maintained. Prayer in this way is analogous to Arendt’s category of natality. Just as no totalitarian regime has destroyed the human capacity to start new life and thus has not destroyed the possibility of the unexpected, the unpredictable, the new, so prayer and the speech and freedom appropriate to prayer cannot be destroyed. Given Arendt’s aphorism “Action entails speech ...[and] speech entails action”, our ability to speak in prayer means that even in the most oppressive and restrictive contexts we can still act<sup>516</sup>.

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<sup>516</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 71.



## Chapter 6.

### The Problem of Necessity.

Arendt's most sustained interaction with the issue of suffering in the political sphere is in her analysis of the French Revolution in *On Revolution*<sup>517</sup>. Here she considers the impact of poverty on the course of the French Revolution and the rise of the 'social question'. In charting the development of the role of poverty in the political sphere from the French Revolution to Marx, she brings to the surface two anti-political forces that mean the issue of poverty is problematic to the political sphere. These are necessity and violence. Speaking of the Revolution she states that with the appearance of the poor in the political sphere, "necessity appeared with them"<sup>518</sup>. This appearance of necessity is significant as it encroaches upon freedom to the extent it "had to be surrendered to necessity, to the urgency of the life process itself"<sup>519</sup>. The introduction of necessity into the political sphere destroys freedom; given freedom is essential to the space in which the relationships that create political power exist, political power is also destroyed. Arendt links this appearance of necessity with "the terror" of the violent masses condemning the "Revolution to its doom"<sup>520</sup>. Yet, it is with Marx that Arendt believes the anti-political force of violence becomes integral to the issue of poverty as a political question. For Marx the issue of poverty was no

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<sup>517</sup> Arendt, *OR*.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*

longer *just* a political question but a “political force”<sup>521</sup>. Marx persuaded the poor that their poverty is “not a natural phenomenon, [but] the result of violence and violation rather than scarcity”<sup>522</sup>. Since poverty occurs not from scarcity, or even an unequal distribution of the necessities for life, but primarily as the result of ‘violence and violation,’ – commonly expressed as exploitation – a “spirit of rebelliousness” was summoned. With this redefinition of poverty, economic conditions are transformed into and explained in political terms. The ideology issuing from this insists that the economy, run for the vested interests of those in power, rests on political power underpinned by violence and as such can only be overthrown by political power underpinned by violence. As with necessity the major casualty for Arendt in this is freedom.

This far in our interaction with Arendt’s thought we have considered the issue of poverty rather than suffering. We do not however need to prove that poverty is synonymous with suffering in Arendt, although that might be the case, for her description of the irruption of the poor onto the political scene to be instructive into our enquiry about suffering as a political question. All we need do is demonstrate that there is a relationship between suffering and poverty and that both are similarly connected to Arendt’s understanding of necessity. In doing this we come against the problem of ‘defining’ what is meant by suffering. This difficulty arises as suffering not only takes manifold forms but also has numerous causes and meanings and in everyday talk is used to describe all manner of pain from the trivial to the serious. It is quite clear that poverty is not

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<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.* p. 52.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

the cause of all suffering, although we must acknowledge the latent function of poverty in other manifest causes of suffering. For example while poverty does not cause all illnesses, there are many that are linked both in their cause and in their progression to issues surrounding poverty. Nevertheless it is axiomatic that the conditions of poverty – and in particular the extreme structural poverty of the ‘masses’ at the time of the French Revolution, and still present in many societies – are those in which human beings find themselves to suffering. As Arendt perceptively notes:

Poverty is more than deprivation, it is a state of constant want and acute misery whose ignominy consists in its dehumanizing force; poverty is abject because it puts men under the absolute dictate of their bodies, that is, under the absolute dictate of necessity<sup>523</sup>.

Likewise, we may say, suffering is more than physical pain. It is a state of constant physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual want and acute misery whose ignominy consists in its dehumanizing force; suffering like poverty is abject because it puts human beings under the absolute dictate of their bodies, thus impinging upon agency. Poverty puts human beings under the absolute dictate of necessity. Poverty and suffering confront us not only with the necessity to act but also an urgency that compounds the loss of space and therefore time to think and discuss and thus compounds the loss of freedom as understood by Arendt. She states: “The direction of the French Revolution was deflected almost from its beginning ...through the immediacy of suffering”<sup>524</sup>. We thus, with due care, can take Arendt’s comments on poverty as problematic for the

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<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

political sphere, because of the introduction of necessity, and apply this to suffering.

Yet, it is not just the one who directly suffers who is under the absolute dictate of necessity. Those who observe suffering also suffer as they empathise, grieve or feel compassion. However, that the Apostle Paul had to instruct the Christians in Rome to “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12.15), indicates we do not always suffer with those who suffer as and when we should; our capacity to empathise is damaged by our sinfulness, by a self-love which means that when we ‘love’ the other we do so insincerely or inconsistently. This is why his instruction to empathise and sympathise is preceded by the statement that “Love must be sincere” (Rom. 12.9), implying that the capacity to empathise or sympathise either in joy or pain flows from a sincerity of love. That this love is *agape* distinguishes it from a love degraded by sinful self-interest.

In chapter 1 we quoted Arendt as stating:

Since the revolution had opened the gates of the political realm to the poor, this realm had indeed become ‘social’. It was overwhelmed by the cares and worries which actually belonged in the sphere of the household and which, even if they were permitted to enter the public realm, could not be solved by political means, since they were matters of administration, to be put into the hands of experts, rather than issues which could be settled by the twofold process of decision and persuasion.<sup>525</sup>

This analysis of the French Revolution summarises her anxiety regarding poverty as a political concern. As a consequence of the admittance of the “cares

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<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.* p. 81.

and worries” of the poor the political realm became “overwhelmed” by the social. Arendt’s use of the transitive verb ‘overwhelmed’ is highly evocative. Yet it chimes even today, especially when we consider the strain in terms of fiscal pressure and demands, political energy and administrative resources the ‘social care’ function of the state places on governments in most developed countries. This is as a result, she claims, of the matters belonging to the household becoming public, matters that cannot be solved by political means. That the poor brought with them ‘cares and worries’ into the political realm strengthens our use of Arendt’s analysis as we apply it to the issue of suffering. For what do the suffering bring to the political realm if not cares and worries? However, as we noted in our previous chapter, the overwhelming of the political and public sphere by private concerns brings with it the “simultaneous decline of the public as well as the private realm”<sup>526</sup>. Politics is damaged as “freedom is surrendered to necessity,” and action becomes impossible for we cannot participate freely in judgement and persuasion. But equally the private realm is damaged by the collapse of antiquity’s ordering of, and distinction between, the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*.

The administrative function the state puts in place to ‘solve’ the problems of poverty relieves the private realm of its duty to care for the poorer members of the household. Compassion becomes formalised and bureaucratised, it becomes a function of the state, and the individual citizen and members of communities are reduced to a compassion whereby they give to the state who then uses this

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<sup>526</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 257.

money to alleviate poverty. This is of course hyperbolic; compassion occurs *laissez faire* between individuals and at the level of civic community. Nevertheless, the state is often seen as restricting and interfering in the freedom of private individuals and private groups to undertake acts of compassion. This is true regardless of whether the government of the day is representative of neo-conservatism, traditional socialism, or 'Third Way' socialism. Neo-conservatism and 'Third Way' socialism, at least in the United Kingdom, hold in common "a belief that the classic welfare state bred ...and fostered a 'dependency culture'"<sup>527</sup>. Indeed, rather than being active citizens of a state, social policy has "encouraged clientalism", an outlook which radically alters one's view of social responsibilities<sup>528</sup>.

### Necessity.

The immediacy of poverty and suffering introduced necessity into the political sphere in the form of compassion. Arendt highlights the role Rousseau and Robespierre play in introducing compassion into political theory and in developing a 'politics of compassion'. It may seem preposterous to suggest that Robespierre, infamous for his 'Reign of Terror', contributed anything to the development of compassion in the political sphere. But if we comprehend Arendt's understanding of compassion then we can grasp why she concludes this.

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<sup>527</sup> Hartley, D., *The Third Way and Social Welfare*, in *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol. 37, No. 7, Dec. 2003, p. 695.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid. p. 696.

Before proceeding with Arendt's account of compassion in political theory it is worth noting that it is less than comprehensive. Her focus on the French Revolution and on Rousseau and the later Robespierre occlude her thought with regard to prior and contemporaneous moral and political thought regarding compassion and similar sentiments and affections. A different narrative history regarding the introduction of compassion to political and moral thought could be given if she had considered its development in the Scottish Enlightenment and the function it played in the thoughts of Francis Hutcheson (1694 - 1746) and Adam Smith (1723 – 1790). We raise this issue, not with the intention of elucidating this alternative Scottish Enlightenment inspired account of compassion, but simply to draw attention to the fact that the introduction of compassion to politics can have more than one result. It also indicates that Arendt has chosen a historical narrative that fits her purpose and theory of necessity in the political sphere.

Key to any political theory is its explanation of that which binds people together and unites people of disparate socio-economic, ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds as a nation. Arendt avers that Robespierre and Rousseau believed compassion fulfilled this function. Compassion, as a 'natural' reaction to suffering, formed "the very foundation of all authentic 'natural' human intercourse"<sup>529</sup>. However, to have compassion for another person is to "co-suffer," and is therefore incapable of reaching out "further than what is suffered by one

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<sup>529</sup> Arendt, *OR*, p. 70.

person”<sup>530</sup>. Compassion, according to Arendt, cannot respond appropriately to the “sufferings of a whole class or a people, or, least of all, mankind as a whole”<sup>531</sup>. Moreover, compassion as selfless love for the other, like love, abolishes the in-between space that constitutes the political sphere. It therefore cannot appear directly in public but must take its political form of pity. However, pity is a problematic sentiment, for as it does not ‘co-suffer’ with the other it maintains a distance and distinction from the other. This means that it is susceptible to becoming a vice, a means of power that “has a vested interest in the existence of the weak”<sup>532</sup>.

Arendt believes Robespierre had such an ‘interest’ as his “glorification of the poor” was followed by a rationalization of “pity’s cruelty”<sup>533</sup>. Devoid of any limits – particularly the limit of friendship – his pity transmogrified into a justice unbound by law as the ‘unequal eye’ of pity could only see virtue in the poor and vice in the wealthy. Arendt concludes that this link of pity to virtue has “proved to possess a greater capacity for cruelty than cruelty itself”<sup>534</sup>. The boundless nature of the sentiment of pity and the ‘overwhelming numbers’ of “boundless suffering” collide and combine to create a perfect storm in which any “considerations of statecraft and principle” are “drowned”<sup>535</sup>.

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<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.* p. 75.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 79 – 80.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80.



We must therefore ask, 'Is there no role for compassion in the public realm?' Arendt is clear: compassion is anti-political and its presence in the public realm must be resisted for the good of both this realm and the private realm. But if the public form of compassion is pity, and as we have seen this can be a sentiment of terror, is there an alternative form compassion can take in public? She reasons that solidarity is the alternative to pity<sup>536</sup>. This grammar of solidarity is held in common between Arendt's politics of unbelief and Metz's politics of belief, yet what each means by solidarity may differ. In its politics of unbelief guise it is not the going public of compassion in another form, for it is not related as passion to sentiment as compassion is to pity, but is genuinely alternative. Its basis is not therefore in any passion, be that love or compassion, but reason. As such it is able to remain dispassionate, allowing it to comprehend 'the multitude' and "the strong and rich no less than the weak and the poor"<sup>537</sup>. Its capacity to look on "both fortune and misfortune" means it is not guided by suffering but is committed to ideas "rather than any love of man"<sup>538</sup>.

It was not just the irruption of the poor into the political sphere that introduced necessity into political life, but from the beginning of our modern era the purpose of government was "to protect the free production of society and the security of the individual in his private life"<sup>539</sup>. Unlike the classical Greek concept of freedom as being released from the activities necessary for sustaining life, here freedom becomes intimately connected to these activities. To ensure

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<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.* p. 78.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> Arendt, *PP*, p. 141.

the security of the individual, politics must conceive of freedom as concerning “those things which are most specifically our own,” namely life and property. Accumulation rather than mere maintenance, becomes a key driver, itself relentlessly driven by nineteenth century conceptions of progress, with the political realm charged with ensuring the ‘natural’ right to hold property and the means of production exclusively. Politics thus becomes the defender of private property and private interests, of those things that by nature cannot be held in common. In taking on this role of guardian, the protector of individual rights to life, production, and property, politics concerns itself with “matters of necessity and not of freedom” as freedom was classically understood. The irony is that in doing so politics itself is not free but must obey the dictates of necessity. This loss of freedom for politics *qua* politics has several implications, two of which concern us here: that politics and the state become functions of society, and that the ability to judge and act upon judgements is superseded by the urgent claims of necessity.

Arendt wants people to participate in political liberty that she thinks is the form that philosophical freedom can take in the political sphere. This is not to say that philosophical freedom and political liberty are one and the same. Philosophical freedom applies only to “solitary individuals”. Given what we have previously noted regarding the relationship of the political to human plurality, then it should immediately strike us that philosophic freedom is pre-political given it only concerns the individual. The absolute freedom of the will that philosophic freedom advocates cannot abide the presence of an equally free

will, as this would impinge upon its own freedom. Philosophic freedom cannot escape the sphere of violence and the competition of will-to-power in which one must dominate and subjugate the other and constantly live in fear of the threat that the other will subjugate and dominate our will.

Freedom therefore becomes a 'problem,' as to assert itself it does violence against the other. Both materialist and Idealist political philosophies try to overcome this 'problem' by doing away with man's freedom to act and bring into being that which could be left undone. With their notion of progress and construal of history as a flow, and therefore determined by 'nature' or a 'world spirit' in Hegel's case, man experiences the loss of the self, of being able to act and make a new beginning.

Arendt's conception of political liberty requires a space free of violence and the fear of violence. It must therefore be a space free from not just violent physical acts but what Pierre Bourdieu terms 'Symbolic Violence'. This latter form of violence does not take up arms to harm the other, but uses language, symbols, and the structures of society to perpetrate violence upon the other and even the self. What is more, symbolic violence involves the unconscious complicity of those on whom this violence is perpetrated. In appropriating Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence here we do so critically. His deconstructive sociological understanding of power / violence structures must itself be deconstructed. As Milbank notes:

To explain beliefs and practices in terms of power relationships universally, demands that one hypostasize 'power' by thinking of it in

isolation from beliefs and practices. Yet the always specific forms of power are ‘fictions’ elaborated precisely by beliefs and practices, so that trying to see ‘power’ as more fundamental than these things is a hopeless task<sup>540</sup>.

We are also concerned that he seems to use ‘power’ and ‘violence’ interchangeably, conflating one with the other. Two quotes from Bourdieu highlight how he uses power and violence interchangeably to describe the same phenomenon: “Symbolic violence, ..., is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity”<sup>541</sup> and “Symbolic power is that power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it”<sup>542</sup>. It is clear from these quotes that he is describing the same phenomenon but on one occasion calls it ‘symbolic violence’ and on the other ‘symbolic power,’ thus conflating power and violence. While power is often allied to violence we abuse the term if we reduce it to power-expressed-only-as-violence. Power is far too complex a concept and reality to be reduced to violence, symbolic or otherwise.

Arendt’s critique of materialist and Idealist political philosophies is therefore also a critique of these philosophies’ symbolic violence. She does not use the term symbolic violence; Bourdieu did not publish his work on symbolic violence until the early 1970’s, so she would not have had access to this term with which to describe how they rob us of our agency and thus our ability to

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<sup>540</sup> Milbank, J, *Theology and Social Theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 92 -3.

<sup>541</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, and Wacquant, Loïc, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge : Polity Press, 1992, p. 167.

<sup>542</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Ed. John B Thompson), Cambridge : Polity Press, 1991, p. 164.

make a new beginning. Nevertheless, even if she had read Bourdieu her valuing of speech as essential to the freedom of the political sphere and her strict demarcation between the spheres leads us to suggest that she would not have seen the danger posed to her violence-free political sphere by the presence of symbolic violence. Yet it is clear to us that these ideological political philosophies visit violence upon political liberty. Thus to participate in political liberty we must inhabit a space in which we can exercise our will without doing violence to others who share that space and also exercise their will. Quoting Montesquieu with approval she states that:

The citizen's political liberty is 'that tranquillity of mind that comes from the opinion that everybody has of his safety; and in order to be in possession of this liberty the government must be such that one citizen could not be afraid of the other'<sup>543</sup>.

Two things arise from this thought. Firstly, citizens are those who inhabit and participate in the sphere of political liberty. Secondly, the question arises as to how government creates the situation whereby one citizen is not in a state of fear of the other or cannot be afraid?

In answering this question Arendt contrasts political liberty with philosophic freedom and the role that law plays in the former. Thus political liberty and citizenship are established and preserved by law. Here we must ask if she is referring to a 'natural law' or 'positive law' for she does not make this explicit, but the difference is important and instructive. We believe that she is referring to positive law in creating the constraints under which we can

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<sup>543</sup> Arendt, *TLM*, p. 199.

experience political liberty and act as citizens. She states that “these laws, made by men, can be very different and can shape various forms of government, all of which in one way or another constrain the free will of their citizens”<sup>544</sup>. That the laws to which she refers are ‘made by men’ strongly indicates that it is positive law which she has in mind. This view is strengthened when we take on board her criticism of Rousseau, the French Revolution and the tradition that follows from this which conceived of man as having inalienable rights expressed as law(s) that find(s) their basis in nature.

It is in constraining the will that the freedom to act is secured. This constraint is not that of necessity but rather the law (*nomos*) gives stability to the space in which political freedom can be established and flourish. The law in constraining our will acts as a tutor for freedom by showing us what we ought not to will and directing us to that which we ought to will.

There is much in Arendt’s account of necessity and its deleterious effects on the private and public realm, especially the public realm, which commends itself to our common sense. It seems obvious that the urgency of suffering’s and poverty’s claims upon the political sphere destroy the freedom required for political deliberation. This, as we have discovered, is due to it destroying the in-between space. Yet to talk of ‘space’ is also to talk of time. The urgency of necessity destroys the time to investigate, deliberate, persuade, and decide. This combines with the ‘overwhelming’ nature of poverty and necessity. We

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<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*

sympathise with Arendt's concerns that this leads to a reduction of politics to a technocratic and scientific discipline that is dominated by economics and administration. Nevertheless, we would take issue with Arendt and her use of the concept of necessity on several fronts. In particular we are concerned that her key concepts and categories are too narrow and divide too sharply one from the other. To unpack this we shall investigate further the concepts of necessity, forgiveness, compassion and household. Within our section on necessity we shall investigate its relationship to freedom and present a Christian understanding of freedom in the political sphere.

### What is Human Necessity?

Arendt asserted, as we noted, that to live in a sphere of life in which necessity is present is to descend to a bestial form of life as the communal life of animals is one under the dictate of necessity. Our concern is not only that she insufficiently reflects upon the comparability of bestial and human necessity but that this is suggestive of an anthropology in which some human beings could be classed as 'sub-human', as bestial, and therefore not afforded the dignity and worth due to all members of the human race. Given Arendt's personal and intellectual history we are sure she would be alarmed at the inference we draw from her comments on human and bestial necessity. Nevertheless, this latent anthropology with its inherent dangers lies at the heart of one of her main concepts. This division of persons between citizens and bestial has led some to

note elitist elements within Arendt's thought<sup>545</sup>. We have ourselves noted this elitist aspect given her realm of freedom in which the political sphere can exist is *de facto* a sphere for the few at the expense of the many. Canovan notes that "for a modern political thinker, [she showed] a truly astonishing lack of interest in the social and economic welfare of the many, except in so far as the struggle to achieve it poses a threat to the freedom of the few"<sup>546</sup>.

Bestial necessity, which we shall henceforth refer to simply as animal necessity, is philosophically and theologically incomparable to human necessity. This is not to deny that to be human is to be a 'type' of animal, nor is it to cleave too sharply between humankind and the rest of creation. Nevertheless, the human animal is distinct from the rest of the animal kingdom. This difference is not just anthropologically our advanced use of language and tools, or our fabrication and use of culture. The distinctiveness we have in mind, which means human necessity is incomparable to animal necessity, is due to humankind being made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Theological consideration of what being made in the image and likeness of God is vast, and it is not our intention to unpack the nuances of various theological positions or take sides in debates between metaphysical, functional, and relational views of the *imago dei*. Rather we shall make two observations from the

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<sup>545</sup> Canovan, M., *The Contradictions of Hannah Arendt's Political Thought*, in *Political Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Feb. 1978, p. 5. Brunkhorst, Hauke, *Equality and Elitism* in Villa, Dana, *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 178 – 198.

<sup>546</sup> Canovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.



Biblical text and reflect upon these to substantiate further that human necessity is not bestial.

Walter Brueggemann notes that in the creation narrative recorded in the book of Genesis: “God speaks directly only to human creatures. The others [that is, all the other creatures of God’s creative acts] have no speech directed toward them”<sup>547</sup>. That God exclusively directs his speech towards the human creature indicates that humankind is informed and directed in a way that no other animal is. Humankind are therefore directed by God’s speech, as opposed to animal instinct, to ‘multiply in number’ (Gen. 1:28). Furthermore, God’s speech gives humankind the freedom and responsibility to have ‘dominion’ over the other animals of God’s creation (Gen. 1:28)<sup>548</sup>. This highlights a facet of what it means to be made in God’s image and likeness. This facet is that by obedience to God’s instructions we witness to “the Goodness of God by exercising *freedom with* and *authority over* all other creatures” entrusted to our care<sup>549</sup>. Human necessity is grounded in God and His speech to humankind rather than an instinctive or involuntary following of the dictates of our body.

The objection may be raised that in extreme situations, in the context of suffering and poverty, humankind acts in disobedience to the speech of God and

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<sup>547</sup> Brueggemann, W., *Genesis : Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Atlanta : John Knox Press, 1982, p. 31.

<sup>548</sup> Dominion understood as caring for, tending and providing for the other animals of God’s creation and not as exploitation and dominance. The instruction to have dominion is therefore parallel to the instruction to be fruitful and multiply, for in our dominion of creation the well-being and fruitfulness of all other creatures is in view.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.

thus falls into animal bestiality. The loss of one's humanity and the descent to bestiality is a theme widely explored in literature. The journey from humanity to bestiality narrated in Golding's *Lord of the Flies* would be such an example. But even in this account of the descent of a group of schoolboys into barbarity, anarchy, and murder, the behaviour of the boys is that of a degenerate human rather than that of an animal. A human person no matter how degenerate they have become is always a degenerate human and never a mere animal. As Spaemann notes: "Human animality, ...never was mere animality, but the medium of personal realisation"<sup>550</sup>. The irrationality and fear, which cause the boys to murder Simon and Piggy and then hunt Ralph, was not the behaviour of animals, but of persons intent on murder. The barbarity of the boys is not linked to necessity – animal or any other sort – but to humankind's capacity for wickedness, to the darkness that lurks in all of us, to the sin within<sup>551</sup>. The descent is therefore not to animal necessity but from obedience to God's speech to disobedience.

For an animal "willing and thinking are not independent variables" and thus action is always contingent upon the animal's condition<sup>552</sup>. This unity of willing and thinking at the service of fulfilling its needs is what we understand Arendt to mean by necessity, given she refers to the communal life of animals under the dictate of necessity. However, for a human person, willing and thinking have a degree of independence that even when under the dictate of

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<sup>550</sup> Spaemann, Robert, *Persons*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 240.

<sup>551</sup> We are speaking metaphorically and do not thus suggest that there is a 'substance' called sin that resides within the human being.

<sup>552</sup> Spaemann, *Ibid.*, p. 59.

necessity retains an element of choice. We will that our children should not starve but be fed and thrive and this activity falls under Arendt's category of necessity. Yet, in such a situation we are able to think about that which confronts us, or who it is which confronts us, in a way that we can "rank intentions preferentially"<sup>553</sup>. A bird with several hungry chicks will feed the mouths that are able to present themselves most forcibly, irrespective of actual hunger. They are all hungry, but the mother bird seems not to discern who is in most need and adjust her actions accordingly. The hungriest chick, the one most in need of food, may not have the strength to present itself for feeding when in competition with fitter and bigger chicks. If we transpose this situation in the realm of human relations an aspect of the difference between human necessity and animal necessity becomes clear. A human mother wills that her children are not hungry and knows that she *needs* to feed them all; but she also thinks about what to feed her children, how to feed them and who should receive what food. Thus while under the dictate of necessity – she must feed her children – the human mother will prioritise who gets what and when, based on an understanding of the resources available and likely to be available in the near future, and on who most urgently needs fed. It is the exception to this behaviour among human parents that requires an explanation; the neglect of a child is seen as a failure of human behaviour, yet it is still described as human behaviour and not animal.

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<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

What then might we conclude regarding human necessity and the issue of suffering? Our illustrations of a bird and her chicks and a mother and her hungry children serve to demonstrate human necessity is not bestial necessity; we are never purely at the dictate of evolutionary formatting, instinct or impulse. The human ability to reflect upon what must be done and how this might be undertaken, presents to the human actor confronted with necessity, choices that are not apparent for the beasts of the animal kingdom. When confronted by someone who is suffering necessity dictates that we must do something, we must relieve the pain the suffering person experiences. Yet, necessity tells us only that we ought to act; there may however be disagreement over what the most appropriate course of action to be taken is. Furthermore, since to suffer is a subjective experience, since it is part of the life of the mind, it demands to externalise itself in a cry. It demands an entry into public speech. The suffering person not only makes their inward experience of pain objective in their speech, but may also be able to contribute to the discourse regarding what might be done to relieve their suffering.

### Are Necessity and Freedom Opposed?

We now return to ask ‘What is freedom?’, and is it, as Arendt suggests, to be free from the dictates of necessity required to sustain bodily life? To answer this question we shall present a Christian understanding of freedom in the political sphere. It is important that we qualify our aim in this section with the words, ‘in the political sphere’. Theological or philosophical discussions of freedom tend to centre around the concept of *liberum arbitrium* and an

individual's ability to make and act on moral choices. Freedom in the political sphere must not limit its consideration to the *liberum arbitrium* of the individual, but must ask, 'What is it to make and act on moral choices in the presence of others who also freely make and act on moral choices?' We must, however, resist the overwhelming influence of modernity that seeks to frame even the question of political freedom with an overemphasis on the individual and thus with an overemphasis on the private sphere. Arendt is surely right that the invasion of the public sphere by private concerns has been deleterious to both these spheres and to life as considered as a whole. Our common world need not only be construed as a battlefield on which wills competing to exert their freedom make either contractarian peace deals with 'the other' or subjugate 'the other' via a will-to-power. Freedom narrowly understood as freedom of the will leads to a truncated view of political freedom and the bonds that unite us in a common world. Freedom is multifaceted, as are the bonds that unite us in a common world, and we aim to show that necessity, rather than destroying this common world, has its part to play in its establishment, maintenance, and good. The sentiment of compassion as a response to suffering works with and not against freedom and in doing so strengthens our common world and the politics proper to it. We shall say more of this as we progress and in our penultimate chapter. Thus, returning to our present discussion, while individual liberty and political freedom are not identical they are related.

The words of Justin Martyr's companion Euelpitus before Rusticus the Prefect of Rome, "I am Caesar's slave but Christ has given me freedom",

highlights the perennial tension the Christian citizen faces, that is between liberty and obligations<sup>554</sup>. There are two basic questions we must answer if we are to understand this tension and reconcile it sufficiently that life may be lived well. Firstly, ‘What does it mean to say that Christ has given me freedom?’

The witness of scripture, and indeed the question itself, gives our answer a Christological focus. Whether it be the words of the Apostle John: “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”, (Jn. 8:35); or the Apostle Paul: “For freedom Christ has set us free”, (Gal. 5:1), the New Testament describes freedom as something that is *in* and *through* the person of Christ. Yet Christology is not Christian Christology if the relation of Christ to God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit is not kept in view. Christology is only proper to itself, and theology in general, if it is understood within a Trinitarian framework, and thus our understanding of freedom must also be understood in a Christologically informed Trinitarian framework. For if the New Testament gives freedom a Christological focus it does so in conjunction with a pneumatological emphasis. *Ubi Spiritus Domini ibi libertas* (2 Cor. 3:17), is a central tenant of a Christian understanding of freedom. To be freed by Christ and to enjoy the liberty the Spirit brings is not something we achieve by human means but it is God’s free gift of grace.

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<sup>554</sup> Quoted in Chenu, M.D., *Christian Liberty and Obligations*, in *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 20, Issue 229, 1939, p. 263. In the version of Justin’s acts that Chenu quotes from, the quote is put in the lips of a nameless companion. However, in Rev. M Dod’s translation of *The Martyrdom of Justin Martyr* we read; “Euelpitus, a servant of Caesar answered, “I too am a Christian, having been freed by Christ” (ANF01, chp. III, [http:// www. ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)). Chenu’s version places in sharpest relief the contrast between being a slave of Caesar and free in Christ, and thus this is the version we have chosen to use. Dod’s however allows us to put these words on the lips of a named rather than anonymous individual.

The political liberty espoused by Arendt, drawing on her understanding of freedom in the Greece of antiquity, is dependant upon freedom being won via liberation by human effort. This notion of freedom-by-revolution means that political freedom in her model is contingent upon, and has as its prerequisite, the violence of struggle and liberation. In contrast to this, freedom understood in the tradition of Christian political thought – that is theologically - acknowledges that it “cannot be acquired; it comes to us as a freedom from outside”<sup>555</sup>. Freedom as that which comes to us from ‘outside,’ from God, is understood within a constellation of theological categories: promise, faith, hope, love, and gift. These categories receive their meaning as they arise from the doctrines of incarnation, redemption, the communion of the saints, and God’s sovereignty. To explicate this we shall bring together the thoughts of Martin Luther and M.D. Chenu O.P.. At first glance it may seem folly to bring together the key figure of the Protestant reformation and a prominent French Catholic Dominican theologian. However, standing outside of the traditions represented by both Luther and Chenu allows us to see certain commonalities and points from which we may synthesise their thoughts. Further to this, while Chenu may be categorised as a Thomist, his view on the “centrality of incarnation for theology” and his declaration that “Catholic theology needed to be disinfected of baroque Scholasticism”, reveal him as a reformer<sup>556</sup>. Embedded in the movement of *ressourcement* Chenu

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<sup>555</sup> Wannenwetsch, B., *Political Worship : Ethics for Christian Citizens* (Trans. Margaret Kohl), Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2004., p. 178.

<sup>556</sup> Potworowski, C.F., *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Maire-Dominique Chenu*, Quebec : McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001, p xi. Kerr, F. *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

focuses on links between “divine mystery and the world of space and time”<sup>557</sup>. His thoughts on freedom are of interest because they are permeated by the incarnation. But, they are also of interest because he seeks to understand what this means in the everyday experience of our common world; in other words he expresses freedom as understood by a politics of belief.

Luther starts his famous treatise *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520) with words reminiscent of Euelpitus and indeed the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 9:19): “A Christian is lord of all, completely free of everything. A Christian is a servant, completely attentive to the needs of all”<sup>558</sup>. This distichal formula corresponds to Luther’s two-nature anthropology in which the human person comprises a spiritual nature and a bodily nature. This two-nature anthropology has been much misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misrepresented.

Many misread into this a Platonic or neo-Platonic dualism and consequentially separate too radically the spiritual and natural with the result that what it is to be a person becomes ambiguous. Luther did not intend such a disjunction and “his Alexandrian leanings in Christology (stressing the union of two natures) naturally led him to emphasize a real *union* of body and soul

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<sup>557</sup> Kerr, *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>558</sup> Luther, M, *The Freedom of a Christian 1520* (Tran. and Introduction Mark D. Tranvik), Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2008, p. 50. We have opted for Tranvik’s recent translation of Luther’s treatise rather than the translation found in Luther’s Works (LW 31) by Harold Grimm. The latter translates the Latin *nulli subiectus* into the English ‘subject to none’. The ‘none’ in English may obscure Luther’s meaning as it may be taken to refer exclusively to other persons, whereas Tranvik’s ‘everything’ draws out the fullness of what Luther has in view. Thus we understand Luther to be concerned that freedom is freedom both from intra-personal relations and our relations to inanimate things.



anthropology”<sup>559</sup>. We must not lose sight of this union, thus of the whole person, in any discussion of Luther’s two nature anthropology and indeed what it is to be free depends upon their unity. It may seem that in interacting with Luther we renege on our aim not to frame the issue in terms of the individual. Yet as a pre-Enlightenment thinker his conception of the person has not been radicalised, the individual has not yet transformed into the isolated autonomous self. His conception of freedom is therefore not freedom from the ‘others’ of society, but freedom *in* the ‘others’ of society. His anthropology warrants how this is so.

Luther states that the spiritual nature refers to “that which is ‘inner’ or ‘new’” and the bodily nature is that “which is called ‘sensual,’ ‘outward,’ or ‘old’”<sup>560</sup>. We shall therefore talk of the inner and outer person. The inner person is not free automatically but is *made* free and justified before God by “faith alone”<sup>561</sup>. By *sola fide* Luther presupposes and includes *sola scriptura* which is attested by his statement that “one thing and one thing alone leads to Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. This is the holy word of God, the gospels of Christ”<sup>562</sup>. We shall return to the role of God’s ‘holy word’ in freedom below. This emphasis on the work of faith in making the inner person free is important, for Luther is at pains to demonstrate that freedom does not issue from our works and is not dependant upon such external human actions. We may participate in a revolution for freedom only to find that we are as unfree under the new regime

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<sup>559</sup> Shults, F. LeRon, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, Grand Rapids : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003, p. 169.

<sup>560</sup> Luther, *Op. cit.* p. 51.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.* p. 54.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.* p. 52.

as under the previous regime. For Luther – and for our own conception of Christian freedom – the regime change that needs to take place is the overthrow of our unbelieving and rebellious self by placing our faith in God’s lordship.

This freedom of the inner person is freedom only in its conjunction to the freedom of the outer person. To phrase this differently: a person is free only in the unity of the inner and outer person. To use a passage of scripture not particularly favoured by Luther, we detect in the unity of the freedom of the inner and outer person the unity of faith and works described by James (Jms. 2:14 – 25). Expressed in Luther’s idiom this is the unity of faith and love. To understand freedom we therefore need to understand the works of the outer person and how this relates to freedom.

Key to his understanding is the comment; “faith in Christ does not free us from works but rather from the foolish view that works result in our justification”<sup>563</sup>. We misunderstand Luther if we believe him to teach that ‘works’ are not essential to the Christian life. He instructs us that to be human is to work, ergo we cannot be without works. Consequently, the important issue is to understand properly the function of our works. Works are not the means to attain righteousness, justification, and freedom, but having attained by faith righteousness from God (gift) then the true nature and purpose of our works is revealed. Works perform the valuable function of exercising control over the

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<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.* p. 90.

body, purifying it of evil desires<sup>564</sup>. Work also has a relational aspect in cultivating relationships with the rest of human kind<sup>565</sup>. Work is also not merely tangential to our worship of God but is done to “please God”<sup>566</sup>. These relational and spiritual aspects of work indicate that work is not exclusively the concern of necessity; it is not purely instrumental. As Luther notes, Adam cultivated and worked the garden prior to the fall not through need but as “the freest of all works ...done simply to please God”<sup>567</sup>.

His triad of work’s purpose coalesces around the idea of faith being active in love (Gal. 5:6) which expresses itself “in the freest possible service” of the neighbour<sup>568</sup>. This service to the neighbour is Christologically focused, for in directing our works to the benefit of the other “we do not live in ourselves but in Christ and the neighbour”<sup>569</sup>. In loving Christ by serving our neighbour we see once again the bringing together of faith and love. Through and in faith we love and serve (worship) Christ through and in our love and care for the needs of our neighbour. The important distinction, and one which for Luther maintains our works as uniting the freedom of the inner person to the outer, is whether what is done is done for our own benefit or for the sake of the neighbour. Not just any or every work flows from and leads to freedom. He states unequivocally: “All our works are to be directed toward the benefit of others”, “freely, having regard for

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<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.* p. 71.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.* p. 73.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.* p. 81.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.* p. 88.

nothing except the approval of God”<sup>570</sup>. This outward focus of works and freedom means that for the Christian freedom is to be found *in* God and neighbour. The category of neighbour takes us outwith the confines of the private sphere into the political. Christian freedom has its basis in both the private and political spheres.

Thus far we have demonstrated that the necessity of work is not the antithesis of freedom. Rather, given freedom is to be found in God and neighbour, in the unity of his or her inner and outer person, the Christian experiences their freedom by faith in Christ and service of the neighbour to whom I am to be Christ and who is Christ to me (Matt. 25: 40). In doing so we challenge Arendt’s claim that necessity must be excluded from the political sphere because it destroys freedom.

What is missing from this account of Christian freedom so far is the role of the Spirit in our freedom. We noted earlier that the Spirit is a central tenet of a Christian understanding of freedom; ου δε το πνευμα κυριον ελευθερια (2 Cor. 3:17). The freedom of the inner person justified by faith is the freedom wrought by the indwelling of the Spirit. Our freedom is a participation in the plenitude of the Spirit; our love and service for the neighbour is simultaneously empowered by the Spirit and is a co-operation and participation in His redeeming work. As Chenu aptly puts it: “The Christian whose soul has become the tabernacle of

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<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.* p.81, p. 82.

Him who is called the Holy Spirit, will enjoy the most sovereign liberty”<sup>571</sup>. Yet this is not the only facet of the work and person of the Spirit in ensuring our freedom.

Given our freedom is always external to us, in God and our neighbour, we become “obsessed by the thought of ...[our] neighbour, of the community of mankind”<sup>572</sup>. This ‘obsession’ is important for there is the temptation – especially in contemporary evangelical Christianity with its emphasis on a personal relationship with God - to lose sight of the communal and social aspects of the Spirit’s work among us. Chenu rightly states that the Christian “may not wrap himself up in his own private salvation, tacitly contributing to the spiritual and temporal wretchedness of his fellows”<sup>573</sup>. The Spirit then by joining us to Christ, so our life is *in* Christ, incorporates us into Christ’s body (1 Cor. 10:16 – 17). To be in Christ leads to a shared participation in the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 1:15, Phil. 3:10); “that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17). This suffering arises in part given that to be in Christ brings us into conflict with those powers that refuse His lordship and are antithetical to the kingdom of God. There is however another important sense in which to be incorporated into Christ’s body leads to suffering. The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth to tell them that if one member of Christ’s body suffers so “all suffer together” with the suffering member (1 Cor. 12:26). Our inclusion in the body of Christ unites us not only with those who are suffering members of his church, but given our

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<sup>571</sup> Chenu, *Op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.* p. 337.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

inclusion in the body of Christ unites us universally with humankind, because in Christ's representative function all humankind is included in His representative nature, so we have a shared participation in the sufferings of all who suffer.

The liberty of the Spirit is not achieved in isolation but in the community of humankind and this liberty is also the freedom to share in the sufferings of others. This sharing may take many forms, but just as Christ gave voice to the 'wordless cry' of those who suffer, so sharing suffering will mean speaking out on behalf of those who suffer; which is to bring their suffering into the political sphere. In following Christ we are called to witness to this freedom in the community of the saints (*koinonia*), which includes the freedom to suffer with others.

Our failure to recognise Christ for who he is means that we may live in rejection of and rebellion against His freedom and as a consequence we fail to take responsibility for our shared participation in the sufferings of others. By seeking the bonds of society in our own efforts we reject Christ's lordship, becoming enslaved to the very things in which we seek our freedom. Rejecting dominical freedom leaves us at the mercy of everything that would seek to claim lordship over us. Christian freedom is therefore intimately linked with submission to God, an idea we will explore further shortly.

We stated that the liberty the Spirit endows us with is achieved in the community of the saints (*koinonia*). This is not in opposition or alternative to the

liberty of the community of humankind. However, as we noted above, humankind does not enter into this freedom in its temporal manifestation to its full measure, given its rebellion against, and rejection of, Christ's lordship. Yet the bonds that unite us in our common world and the freedom we can experience there are not vanquished. This is because as the *communio sanctorum* God's people unite as a society under Christ's lordship – the church - witnessing to the proper source and guarantee of our common world that the world may be attentive to this and imitate the church. Yet the *communio sanctorum* is not just the church gathered but also the church hidden in the world, the church in diaspora. Just as the inner and outer person must be held in unity to maintain the whole person, so the gathered and diaspora church must be held in unity. The Christian in union with Christ and therefore with the *communio Christo* lives and moves in a world that rejects Christ's lordship, yet he or she by loving the neighbour as Christ not only witnesses to freedom and the bonds of our common world, but in faith, hope, and love actualises this freedom and bonds of the world, making the common world possible. The common world, which we call the political sphere, is therefore not just Arendt's 'in-between-space'. The centripetal and centrifugal forces of this space are given existence and energy by Christ's lordship and Spirit. This is concretised in the act of neighbour love, meaning that our common world is always a world that is 'becoming'.

This leads us to the final work of the Spirit we shall examine in this section: the Spirit who confronts us with, makes alive to us, and enables us to keep God's command. To speak of obedience to command, submission to God,

may seem contrary to any concept of freedom. Yet it is impossible to understand the liberty of humankind apart from submission to God. This much should already be apparent from our dominical account of freedom. There are two points we seek to garner and make translucent in order to progress an adequate account of Christian freedom in the political sphere. The first is the link between yielding to God and our service of the neighbour. The second regards the correlation between freedom and authority.

Given we have at length explicated freedom as service of God through serving our neighbour, our comments regarding the link between this and submission to God need only be brief. Indeed Luther himself provides a summation of much we would want to say:

...by yielding wholly to God, one does these works out of a spirit of spontaneous love, seeking nothing other than to serve God and yield to him in all earthly labours<sup>574</sup>.

The freedom of the inner man that is made visible in the love of the neighbour is dependant upon his submission to God's claim upon him and our acquiescence to Christ's lordship. This lordship and obedience is not synonymous with the human paradigm of ruled and ruling. "Obedience to God is in quite another order from obedience to man"<sup>575</sup>. Our freedom, dependant as it is on our yielding to God, is only intelligible by understanding the authority of Christ within the life of a Christian, an authority that confronts us in Word and Spirit. It is to this issue of authority we now turn and examine how it is the correlate of freedom.

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<sup>574</sup> Luther, *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>575</sup> Chenu, *Op. cit.*, p. 271.



Arendt's vision of action arising from a sphere of ideas and discourse does not provide an adequate ground for action to be realised. This is because her starting point is persuasion that is not in itself a ground for action but merely the rhetorical phase of presenting such grounds in the presence of others. Persuasion, therefore, appeals to an authority as that which evokes our action, provides the ground from which we act, and makes such action intelligible to others and ourselves. Authority, which we must bear in mind is not just another name for force and power, but is distinct from these, finds its source in the one who is authoritative. Theologically speaking true political authority, authority that confers freedom rather than inhibiting it, has its source in God's authority, the Lord of heaven and earth. God's authority "evokes free action because it holds out to the worshippers a fulfilment of their agency within the created order in which their agency has 'place and meaning'"<sup>576</sup>. The authority of God is not opposed to freedom for it is as we come under this authority that we understand by faith the goal of creation and our part in it. We are free under this authority as in it we discover what it is to be human, who we are as a person, and what has been given for us to do. We discover who we are pneumatologically as we "receive ourselves from outside ourselves, addressed by a summons which evokes that correspondence of existence to being. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (2 Cor. 3:18)"<sup>577</sup>.

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<sup>576</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 32.

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.* p. 252.

This presents us with a structure of command and obedience that makes intelligible temporal obligations as they confront us, as in this we recognise our primary obligation to love God. That these temporal obligations oblige us at all is because they receive their authority and claim upon us from this primary obligation. We do not, however, view this synchronically, thus the Christ-event decisively shapes our understanding of temporal political authority as that belonging to the earthly city. The authority of earthly powers is not final and opaque and as such is impure and capable of limiting and depriving our freedom. Yet the Christ-event does not merely negatively consign earthly authority to a realm of un-freedom. The doctrines of incarnation and redemption of which we must speak if we are to make intelligible the Christ-event are here called upon to unearth the positive movement of the Christ-event for the earthly city and our political freedom.

We have already noted the importance of incarnation for our theory of Christian freedom with our thoughts regarding Christ's representative nature. However, following an Athanasian logic leads us to understand that in becoming fully man Christ took upon himself all that it is to be human, the "social factors as well as the individual"<sup>578</sup>. In doing so not just the individual aspects of the person are redeemed by God but the social aspects of the human person must also be redeemed. The positive movement of the Christ-event for the earthly city and our political freedom is therefore the sanctification of the human person in and with society. Bearing witness to God's redemption of humankind the

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<sup>578</sup> Chenu, *Op. cit.*, p. 340.

Christian seeks to, in co-operation with the Spirit, create or transform the institutions of society and in doing so mitigate their rebellion to Christ's lordship.

We noted earlier near the beginning of our discussion of Christian freedom that God's 'holy word' plays an important role, one we have not yet made sufficiently clear. It is to this task we now turn our attention and in doing so shall show how God's word interrupts the claims and demands of necessity upon us by re-orientating our lives and presenting us with a counter vision for the relationship of freedom and necessity.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ instructs his followers not to worry about their lives: "what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear" (Matt. 6:25). Here we have an acknowledgement that life is bodily life, a life for which eating, drinking, clothing and shelter are necessary. Yet we are told not to 'strive for these things'. To be beholden to the striving and anxiety connected to the necessities for life is to have wrong priorities and a lack of faith in God. Instead, Christ presents to his hearers a prioritisation that reconciles necessity and freedom: "But strive first for the kingdom of God", with the promise that "all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). Christ does not merely warn of the necessities of life becoming idolatrous, usurping the place that is God's, but instructs us that "it is not the necessary which has to be surmounted; it is worry about it"<sup>579</sup>. God's word interrupts our preoccupation and worry with the necessary and sets our life and thoughts aright

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<sup>579</sup> Wannenwetsch, *Ibid.*, p. 178.

in relation to His kingdom. To speak of a kingdom is to talk politically, thus this is not a privatistic, individualistic reorientation of priorities, but is to make a communal and political claim upon us. By giving the kingdom of God a political priority the necessary is absorbed into a sphere that is itself not dependant upon that which is necessary for its existence or support. “The necessary things are [therefore] to be hoped for *within the freedom of the kingdom itself*”<sup>580</sup>.

### The Church as Polis?

One of the first things we noted in Chapter 5 when we set out the key features of Arendt’s political philosophy was the prominent place she gives the category of ‘the household’ and its designation as non-political. It is within this sphere of life, the private realm of the household, that necessity belongs. For Arendt suffering should be the concern of the household and not of politics. If the household enters the political realm then ergo its concerns and the problem of necessity also enter the political realm. This, along with the issues of plurality and ‘ruled and ruling’, is the main reason she wants to keep the household distinct from the political sphere. We noted that her thoughts on the political status of the household are of interest to political theology given the biblical description of believers as belonging to the ‘household of faith’ (Gal. 6:10) and ‘the household of God’ (Eph. 2:29).

The church as the household of God, made up of many households of faith, marks a radical redefinition of the household known in antiquity. As such

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<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*

Arendt's description of the household serves as a contrast to this eschatological household of faith. Here we shall address three issues she raises and argue they are not descriptive of the household of faith.

As previously noted, Arendt argues that necessity's proper place is within the household because it has "no place within it for the individual" and given relationships are based on familial love there is not the plurality required for this sphere to be political<sup>581</sup>. At that point we stated the plurality to which she referred was not merely a difference of persons but the difference of the life of the mind and the view one holds, along with the freedom to express this. If we are to counter Arendt by stating the compassion shown within the household of faith can, without being detrimental to political life, appear in the public sphere then we need to address two issues. Firstly, does the love one for the other expressed in the eschatological household destroy plurality? Secondly, and related to this, is the plurality as the difference of minds really the *conditio sine qua non* and *conditio per quam* of political life? And if so, can such plurality be accounted for in the eschatological household, the church?

Let us start by considering the issue of love in the household of God. At the Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples just before he was betrayed drew to a close he instructed them: "I give you a new commandment, that you love (αγαπαε) one another. Just as I have loved you (ηγαπησα), you also should love (αγαπαε) one another" (Jn. 13:34). The context of this instruction is Christ's

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<sup>581</sup> Arendt, *PP*, p. 94.

foot washing of his disciples' feet and it is this that helps us understand what it means to love each other as he has loved us. Christ's actions, which form part of this farewell discourse, are a symbolic enactment of what he would do for his followers though his death. Mary's washing of Christ's feet (Jn. 12: 1 – 8) foreshadow his scandalous, costly, complete self-giving love. In giving us an example to follow (Jn. 13:15) Jesus defines for us the love we are called to show.

Arthur C. McGill captures this well when he says:

...man only begins to love as Jesus commands when he gives out of what he cannot 'afford'. For Jesus, it is the deliberate and uninhibited willingness to expend oneself for another that constitutes love<sup>582</sup>.

It is this expending oneself out of what we cannot afford for another that means love does not destroy plurality. This is not a love that seeks its own good, nor seeks to make the other conform to our-self, but in abandoning 'ourselves' in love we seek the well-being and flourishing of the other. That we in ourselves cannot 'afford' such expenditure reveals that to love as Christ loved is to love in the power of the Spirit. When we love as Jesus has taught us our love is transformed by and joins with the love of Christ. This is not a love that abrogates the 'other' but perceives and upholds their dignity as a person; a dignity they may be incapable of recognising themselves given suffering and poverty often rob a person of their sense of being of value. As such it respects and indeed protects their individuality, their otherness from us. Christian unity is always unity-in-difference and as such this love, which is not confined within the church but 'flows' out from the church, does not destroy plurality, meaning it can appear in the political sphere.

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<sup>582</sup> McGill, Arthur C., *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method*, Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 1982, p. 55.

This brings us to the difference of minds as the *conditio sine qua non* and *conditio per quam* of political life. What this misses as a definition or description of political life is the coming together or reconciliation of differing views in a common purpose. Political life must also include this movement of the meeting and coming together of minds. In Arendt's household such a coming together could not freely occur as in her household each member was required to conform to the will of the head of the house or clan under the threat of violence. Given the eschatological household of the New Testament church is one in which we freely out of mutual love submit to each other, there is not in this household the element of duress or spectre of compulsion and violence. With Christ as the head of the house the 'rule' of the house is one of peace not violence.

We are, however, as disciples of Christ called to "be of the same mind" (Phil. 2:2). Does this validate Arendt's hypothesis? We do not think it does. St. Paul in extolling the Philippian church to be of the same mind, is calling us to:

[D]o nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others (Phil. 2: 3- 4).

In other words, to be of the same mind is to love each other as Christ has taught us. The broad and generous orthodoxy of Christian theology is not a narrow conformity in which there is not variety of valid viewpoints.

For all we may admire the scope and intellect of Arendt we are left rather puzzled as to what we are to do with her political philosophy and this vision of politics based on unbelief. Indeed, we are left with the uneasy feeling that Arendt has left us 'high and dry'. Her vision of the political does not provide a ground from which to act and thus ironically takes on that feature of ideology of which she is so scathing, that is, it does not seek to change the world.

A major failing of her thought and a reason why it leaves us 'high and dry' is that she is not attentive enough to the social structures in which her concept of the political has its roots and meaning. The Greek *polis* and its concepts of action, speech, and freedom are dependant upon the social structures particular to that epoch in history. The freedom of necessity experienced by the citizen of the polis which forms the ground for his or her action and speech, thus politics, is at the expense of, and reliant upon the un-free many. It therefore seems condemned to always be the politics of the few, citizenship for the few, and therefore the exclusion of the many. Clearly, Arendt is not advocating a return to a society so structured that an elite few can live free from necessity due to the labour and work of the many. Yet she does not adequately state how we can achieve such freedom – and thus create a space not dominated by necessity- within our modern society. Her concept of politics and her key categories cannot therefore escape the clutches of their socio-historical particularity. This is not to say that we cannot learn from Arendt, or from the socio-historical period in which she bases much of her thought. Nevertheless, we must be careful that when we



plunder the past we do not end up transporting into our present artefacts that, devoid of their proper context, are fit only to be displayed as museum pieces.

## **Chapter 7.**

### **The Politics of Belief and the Politics of Unbelief:**

#### **Forgiveness and Repentance.**

This chapter shall outline the importance of forgiveness and repentance for a politics that includes suffering as an appropriate concern. As we have seen, Metz's response to the issue of suffering is to call for the conversion of the bourgeois subject so that he or she will live in solidarity with those who suffer: the poor, the victim and the vanquished. Such a response, if it is to address the issues surrounding suffering and be transformative, cannot merely be a solidarity of sympathy but, Metz argues, must result in a transformed way of living by the bourgeois. This solidarity, or as we shall argue for – Christian charity as neighbour love – presupposes amicable relations between those who are brought together in any solidarity. We cannot be in solidarity with those whom we call our enemy or whom we oppress, thus contra Arendt we claim that it is guilt and hate, rather than love, which destroys the in-between space that constitutes a political sphere in which solidarity can be realised. To be in solidarity means we must be able to call each other friend, or brother or sister rather than oppressor or victim and thus a conversion of identity is required. Ultimately, if we are to act as neighbours who extend mutual care one to the other, then acknowledgement of responsibility for wrong-doing and the offer of forgiveness and commitment to repentance are required if the guilt and hate that infuse the political space with distrust and enmity are to be dealt with and our identities transformed into that of neighbours capable of such care.

The weight of the chapter shall be on forgiveness, given Arendt devotes time to this issue and we wish to interact further with her on this topic. However, forgiveness does not stand-alone, but if it is to be sufficient to transform and sustain relations to what they can and should be, rather than a diminution of human relations as God intended, then repentance is required. If one is to act with compassionate regard for those who suffer then one cannot continue as an oppressor, even a forgiven oppressor, but must redefine oneself in relation to the deeds that defined him as an oppressor.

In considering the role of forgiveness in the political realm Arendt is of great service given she includes it as a remedy to the problems that flow from the unpredictability of action. The complexity of modern social and economic relations means that even where we aim at doing good there may be unintended outcomes and hidden socio-economic and industrial relations than mean our actions have caused harm and suffering. Arendt's concept of forgiveness is important in attending to such unintended harm and suffering. Forgiveness and repentance also need to be active where suffering is caused not only as a result of the unpredictability of action, but also in those situations where harm, often from the wilful pursuit of self interest, has knowingly been done and suffering caused. To forgive in these situations we need the empowering of God's spirit; to repent of such self-interest and wilful oppression of others we need to be transformed by the love of God.

If Arendt speaks to us about forgiveness then Metz has something to say to us regarding repentance and guilt and we shall consider this before retuning to Arendt's understanding of forgiveness. His brief comments on forgiveness appear early in his career in *Unsere Hoffnung*, and *Vergebung der Sünden, Theologische Überlegungen zu einem Abschnitt aus dem Synodendokument „Unsere Hoffnung“*, published in 1977. He does not write on the matter again. In section five of the Synodal document, titled *Vergebung der Sünden*, his direct comments on forgiveness are very brief. He stresses our need for “divine forgiveness” given it is this that truly provides freedom: a freedom that leads us away from the “alienation of ourselves”<sup>583</sup>. God “makes us free”<sup>584</sup>. For Metz forgiveness is most definitely “*durch Jesus angebotene*”: offered through and by Jesus<sup>585</sup>. The importance of this statement will become clear as we proceed. The understanding of forgiveness briefly stated by Metz “distinguishes Christianity from all systems of terror and also from a self-righteous and joyless moralism”<sup>586</sup>.

He also comments on guilt and repentance in *Unsere Hoffnung*. He suggests that we either take upon ourselves false guilt or an overinflated sense of innocence. He therefore urges the church to preach on the need for repentance, but cautions that in doing so two extremes are to be avoided. Firstly, in asserting the need for repentance the church must not “incapacitate people through fear”<sup>587</sup>. On this matter, that fear and guilt incapacitate, Arendt and Metz are in

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<sup>583</sup> Metz, *UH*, p. 95.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*

agreement. Secondly, Metz states we must not ignore, repress or hide from that for which we are responsible and therefore that for which we may bear guilt. He states that we have ignored our responsibilities by flattening out our awareness of the disasters that mean history is a history of suffering. He forbids us to look the other way.

In his reflections upon this Synodal document he does not directly add to what he said in *Unsere Hoffnung* regarding forgiveness. Rather, his attention is drawn to an “irrational desire for innocence” which he counters with a theological theme of guilt and responsibility<sup>588</sup>. He proposes that Enlightenment freedom has embedded in it a “systematic will-to-innocence” that robs the enlightened subject – whom he will as we know come to call the bourgeois subject – of any responsibility for the other. While it is implied that this freedom is accomplished through Jesus this theme is not developed as Metz chooses to concentrate on our quest for innocence gained by means other than forgiveness. Innocence, which is not based on forgiveness, is an innocence based on a shirking or denial of our responsibilities. This leads either to “banality”, in its Arendtian sense, or to transference of our guilt to God in the theodicy question.

Why is forgiveness a marginal, almost ignored, doctrine within Metz’s political thought? Our tentative explanation is that Metz’s emphasis on the Holocaust and the horrors of Auschwitz results in him understanding evil in terms of Kant’s ‘radical evil’. This brings to breaking point the human desire for

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<sup>588</sup> Metz, *Vergebung der Sünden, Theologische Überlegungen zu einem Abschnitt aus dem Synodendokument „Unsere Hoffnung“* in *Stimmen Derzeit*, Heft 2, Februar 1977, p. 120.

justice as no punishment seems to equate with the evil committed and the suffering unleashed. Radical evil presents itself as unpunishable and unforgivable. Furthermore, we can speculate that Metz may have feared that to draw attention to forgiveness would have placed a temptation in our path regarding Auschwitz that is dangerous. The temptation is that Christianity and society would “decree for itself – at last – acquittal and, poised over the abyss of horror, to get the whole thing – at last – ‘over with’”<sup>589</sup>. However, to adopt such a stance is not to take the stance of Christian theology that insists that God’s forgiveness is radical, thus there are no unforgivable sins and there are no unforgivable people.

Given Arendt advocates the separation of religion from political life it is interesting that the religious concept of forgiveness takes an important role in her political theory. Her concept of forgiveness focuses on what we shall call the *attitudinal strand* whereby a cessation of on-going bitterness, resentment, and anger is sought. In this context it is primarily a means to maintain consensus in the political sphere by repairing and maintaining the trust, equality, and freedom required for the political relationships needed for this consensus to itself be efficacious. Arendt argues that the power to forgive does not “derive from God,” so man is able to forgive independently from God<sup>590</sup>. She supports this argument with her reading of Luke 5:21-24. She further argues from Matthew 18:35 and Mark 11:2 that man does not forgive because God does but man’s forgiveness precedes God’s and therefore has its origin in man and not in God<sup>591</sup>. While

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<sup>589</sup> Metz, *EC*, p. 30.

<sup>590</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 239.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*

given there is a lack of interaction with, or appeal to, any canon of Jewish writings in her work, and thus disagreement regarding how her Jewishness impacts upon her thought, we note precedencies in Jewish understandings of forgiveness for the arguments she makes.

Emmanuel Levinas typifies the thought that man's forgiveness of his fellow man has an independence from God. He states:

Jewish wisdom teaches that He Who has created and Who supports the whole universe cannot support or pardon the crime that man commits against man... the fault that offends man does not concern God. The text thus announces the full autonomy of the human who is offended,...No one, not even God, can substitute himself for the victim. The world in which pardon is all-powerful becomes inhuman<sup>592</sup>.

Here the act of forgiveness, with its emphasis on human autonomy, assumes a purely 'horizontal' character to the extent that God is excluded from this act. The exclusion of God from acts of interhuman forgiveness is grounded on his concept of the "full autonomy" of the injured party. The victim, if still alive, is autonomous in as much as he has the power to forgive or not forgive on his own account. Yet, this is also the case if we understand God's forgiveness to be active. God may forgive the perpetrator his wrong actions while the victim refuses to forgive. In this case the victim can still choose to forgive or not to forgive. It therefore seems that Levinas' real point is that an injury is irreducibly private, it cannot be shared or made common, but is the sole possession of the one who has been wronged. Such an understanding of injury and forgiveness presents the

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<sup>592</sup> Levinas, E. *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Trans. Sean Hand), Maryland : John Hopkins University Press, 1990, p. 104.

human person as an enclosed individual soul rather than a being-in-relation. It denies the social character of a wrong, about which we shall say more later.

Arendt's assertion that man's forgiveness precedes God's also finds precedence in a Jewish understanding of forgiveness. In comparing Jewish and Christian understandings of forgiveness Gregory Jones notes that in Judaism interhuman forgiveness is a prerequisite for Gods: "God forgives the person only after such interhuman forgiveness has taken place"<sup>593</sup>. Arendt takes this thought a step further by concluding that the power to forgive has its origin in man and not God.

A different understanding of forgiveness, one which challenges Arendt's understanding, emerges if we read the passages of scripture she argues from within the tradition of Christian understandings of forgiveness. The overriding theme of Luke 5 is the revelation of who this Jesus is and the nature of the authority he has<sup>594</sup>. Arendt, knowingly or not, picks up on an old dispute over the phrase the Son of Man in verse 24. This dispute suggests the original Aramaic *bar nasa* simply meant 'man' rather than son of man. If this were the case Arendt's argument would have substance for "this would mean that the saying originally referred to an authority given to man in general"<sup>595</sup>. However,

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<sup>593</sup> Cf. Newman, L.E., *The Quality of Mercy: On the Duty to forgive in the Judaic Tradition*, in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 15/2, Fall, 1987, p. 168. Jones, L. Gergory, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*, Grand Rapids : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, pp. 108 – 9.

<sup>594</sup> Marshall, I. Howard, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Exeter : The Paternoster Press, 1978, p. 210.

<sup>595</sup> Hooker, M. D., *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, London : A & C Black, 1991, p. 87.



such a reading “has found few followers because the context clearly focuses on Jesus and his claim of special authority”<sup>596</sup>. The context of Jesus’ pronouncement that he is ‘the Son of Man’ is one of healing, establishing a link between his authority and his ability to forgive and heal. This conflation of authority to heal and authority to forgive sins indicates a link between forgiveness and the transformation of a person’s situation from one of suffering to one of wholeness. If ‘the Son of Man’ is a misunderstanding of the original phrase *bar nasa*, then following Arendt’s logic we would need to claim that man in general can miraculously heal without any reliance upon the divine. The link between healing and forgiveness and Jesus’ use of the title the Son of Man suggests that it has a theological and specific Christological meaning.

Contra Arendt, we understand Jesus’ self designation as ‘the Son of Man’ not as a claim of separation or independence from God, but the disclosure of the *nature* of his relationship to God. As God’s representative ‘on earth’ the Son of Man has been given authority to both heal and forgive sins *now*. This authority is dependant upon this relationship. The “on earth” that Arendt draws attention to indicates that in the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity neither his authority nor his relationship to God the Father have been diminished. Luke 5, therefore, teaches that the authority to forgive requires and is dependant upon an authority from God. The phrase “on earth” simply emphasises that this was an authority Jesus already possessed and could enact and was not, as many of the

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<sup>596</sup> Guelich, R.A., *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 34A, Mark 1 – 8:26*, Dallas : Word Books, 1989, p. 89.

other Son of Man statements in the Gospels suggest, an authority he would receive at the Parousia.

When we reflect more broadly upon this conflict narrative and the other conflict narratives in the gospels a distinctive facet of political theology emerges. This conflict pericope in line with others shows the established authorities in conflict with Jesus. This conflict does not, however, lead to revolution, long awaited by many of the populace. There is no hint that it was ever the intention of Jesus to overthrow the established authorities. Rather, he reveals the true and proper source of earthly authority and that this authority is dependant upon acknowledging his Lordship; an authority which itself finds its source in his relationship with the “Lord of heaven and earth” (Matt. 11:25). Authority “over the nations,” which Christ himself received from his Father (Rev. 2:28), and which is his to distribute by his Spirit, is given to those who ‘conquer’ and do his “works to the end” (Rev. 2:26). Indeed to think of authority, its proper source and our attentiveness to it, and its distribution to ‘us’ is to think in a Trinitarian manner. Thus we cannot acknowledge Christ’s lordship without simultaneously acknowledging Yhwh’s kingship. The knowledge of Yhwh’s kingship makes the status quo of earthly powers unsustainable and finds its proper expression in the worship of the king of heaven (Dan. 4:37). While there is an eschatological emphasis to this, especially those passages in the Revelation of John of Patmos that speak of Christ’s followers ruling the nations, our passage in Luke 5 reminds us that this authority is not *all* future. Just as Jesus had the authority to enact and demonstrate his lordship *on earth*, so as Christ is present by his Spirit in His

church and in His followers, His authority is enacted and demonstrated by their outworking of His works by the Spirit. Furthermore, as we shall go on to demonstrate, Christ's authority *on earth* is not restricted to the 'works' of His church, but the 'freedom' of the person of the Spirit includes a freedom to act out with and apart from the church and individual followers. This is not to minimise the missionary presence of the church in the world in which it witnesses to the authority and Lordship of Christ. But it is to acknowledge that the church is the 'creature' of the Spirit and not vice versa, thus the Spirit in His dignity and freedom shapes and providentially guides earthly affairs towards the goal of history, the transformation and reconciliation of 'all things', the eternal reign of Christ, and God's dwelling place with humankind (Rev. 21).

What then are we to make of Arendt's argument based on Matthew 18:35 and Mark 11:25 that man's forgiveness is not derived from or dependant upon God's, but man's forgiveness finds its origin within man? This is an important point not only in relation to forgiveness but also for Arendt's conception of what an act is. If man's acting is dependant upon God then it is not an act in Arendt's terms for if an act is to be 'a man's' it must arise within him and not be in concert or have its genesis with that which is outwith him, that is God. To these two passages she also adds the words Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). She concludes: "In all these instances, the power to forgive is primarily a human power"<sup>597</sup>. Is Arendt justified in understanding these texts and thus forgiveness in this way?

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<sup>597</sup> Arendt, *HC*, p. 239.

By zeroing in on Matthew 18:35 Arendt uses the text as a proof text to substantiate the point she wants to make. Her argument, in line with that developed from her reading of Luke 5:21 – 24, is that the human person does not forgive because God does. That she selects this verse is of little surprise, as an isolated reading of it seems to support her claims. If, however, we consider Matthew 18 as a whole, verse 35 cannot be read as proposing that ‘the power to forgive is primarily a human power,’ or that God’s forgiveness is dependant upon or derived from human forgiveness. Indeed the picture of forgiveness within the Matthaean community that emerges from this chapter is that the power to forgive issues from our status as sinners forgiven by God. This is collaborated by the witness of the New Testament as a whole. Put at its simplest, we forgive because God has forgiven us.

If Arendt is not right in reading Matthew 18:35 as teaching that the capacity to forgive finds its origin in human kind and precedes divine forgiveness, how are we to understand this passage? Key to understanding the meaning of verse 35 is its relation to the rest of the parable of the ‘unforgiving servant’ and Jesus’ teaching on prayer in Matthew 6. Further to this it must also be understood within the framework of what the New Testament teaches us about the character of God, grace, justification, and forgiveness. This wider perspective brings to the fore an important question: ‘Does the New Testament present an harmonious consensus in its teaching about forgiveness, or are there irreconcilable differences and tensions between the likes of Matthew 18:25 and

Colossians 3:13?’ We believe that without ignoring the challenge of Matthew 18:35 a unified picture emerges of the ability and need for human persons to forgive because of God’s indiscriminate and extravagant forgiveness.

The pericope Matthew 18:21 – 35 is “not simply a *parable* ‘about the forgiveness of guilt’,” but, is primarily about mercy<sup>598</sup>. The link between forgiveness and mercy indicates the importance of repentance: if the servant had been repentant he would have shown similar mercy to his debtor that he himself had received. This connection of forgiveness, repentance and mercy also links to our concern regarding suffering. That we have been forgiven by God releases us to live lives of mercy; it allows us to share the mercy God has showed us with those to whom we are connected that are suffering.

The language of Matthew 18:35 “takes up the language and substance of 6:14 – 15,” and it is in the instruction preceding the prayer in Chapter 6 that we believe the hermeneutical key to this issue lies<sup>599</sup>. This ‘key’ is the instruction to not be like the hypocrites, a theme that permeates Matthew’s gospel and would have decisively shaped Matthean discipleship. Indeed, not being like the hypocrites is a theme that permeates New Testament Christianity and is also key to understanding James 2:13 which is often read in parallel with Matthew

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<sup>598</sup> Luz, H., *Matthew 8 – 20: Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Trans. James E. Crouch, Ed. Helmut Koester), Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2001, p. 475.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*

18:35<sup>600</sup>. In relation to the specific practice of forgiveness to act as a hypocrite is to receive forgiveness without showing repentance.

In Matthew 18 the slave who received mercy acts as a hypocrite by not showing mercy to his fellow slave in forgiving his debt. Our refusal to forgive as we have been forgiven is tantamount to a rejection of God's mercy towards those whom we should forgive. Our refusal to forgive as we have been forgiven discloses whom we truly worship and in whom or what we truly have faith. By refusing to forgive his fellow slave the one who had received mercy revealed that his heart was unrepentant, but was full of the love of money and not love of his King and neighbour. Matthew instructs us to forgive our brother – which is broader than our kin; nor is it restricted to the male but is indicative of those who are members of the community of faith, that is the church – from our hearts for it is the heart that discloses where and what our 'treasure' is, that which we value most highly, that which we worship (Matt. 6:21). That the unmerciful servant did not forgive his fellow servant in word only, but also in deed, reveals him as a hypocrite and lover of money, a lover of things over and before people. If we refuse to forgive as we have been forgiven we call into question God's judgement and seek to make his judgement our own. In doing so we not only display a lack of faith in God but we imagine that we can usurp his authority to judge by taking matters into our own hands. "Do not judge lest you be judged" (Matt. 7:1) is the warning that accompanies the warnings about refusal to forgive. There is

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<sup>600</sup> The second chapter of James is dominated by the theme of our discernment being aligned to God's. Our argument and logic concerning the Matthaean passage can with very little adjustment be applied to this section of James.

therefore a connection between God's forgiveness and ours, "but it is a given that God's forgiveness is always prior"<sup>601</sup>. The Matthaean warnings about judgement pronounced on those who do not forgive their brother do not substantiate Arendt's separation of human authority and the human ability to forgive from divine forgiveness. They do not indicate a logical or chronological sequencing in which our human act of forgiveness comes first. Rather, we forgive each other just as the Lord has forgiven us (Col. 3:13, Eph. 4:32), and in doing so extend and participate in the love and forgiveness that God has shown to ourselves and those we must forgive.

The account of forgiveness we encounter in Arendt is what we term the attitudinal strand. This important aspect of forgiveness seeks to clear from the relational in-between space attitudes among which would be bitterness, resentment, distrust and anger. However, these negative and damaging attitudes are only properly attended to if forgiveness also includes a judicial and moral strand. Forgiveness thus has a threefold structure: only together do these three strands form forgiveness. The judicial strand acknowledges that forgiveness is intrinsically connected to the claims of justice. Forgiveness recognises wrong has been done and declares it as such, yet it does not seek punishment or revenge. It thus affirms that there has been a failure to do that, which was right; it acknowledges its moral strand. These two strands remind us that forgiveness is not merely a change of attitude, but with its goal of healing the damaged

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<sup>601</sup> Hagner, D.A., *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 33A, Matthew 1 – 13*, Dallas : Word Books, 1993, p. 152.

community it initiates a new relationship between the wronged and the wrongdoer.

Furthermore, to accept forgiveness offered is to accept the challenge of repentance, it is to accept that more than attitudes may need to change. Repentance, placed within the context of its eschatological end, aims not merely at a change of emotion, mind or behaviour, but involves a radical transformation of identity. The repentant person therefore does not just act differently but their identity is transformed from that of wrongdoer to neighbour and friend. This transformation does not exist as an ontological category; forgiven and repentant we may be, however, this side of the eschaton we remain forgiven and repentant sinners. Repentance is not a guarantee we shall not cause others to suffer again, thus we must always be open to forgive and repent. The transfer of identity from oppressor to neighbour is always a “*becoming*”<sup>602</sup>.

The judicial and moral stands also remind us that to be wronged is not merely to have one’s personal or private preferences offended, it is to fail morally, commit injustice or break the law. The moral and judicial strands lift the wrongdoing, its consequences and the restoration of relations above the individual or private sphere into the political one. Morality, justice, its antonym injustice and law are concerns of the community and not just of the household.

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<sup>602</sup> Wannenwetsch, *PW*, p. 232.



Where, however, does this leave the concept of respect, which Arendt proposes is enough to enable forgiveness? Can forgivingness based on respect rather than love incorporate and sustain the three strands of forgiveness proposed as integral to a properly functioning forgiveness? Indeed, is forgiveness based on respect alone adequate to empower the attitudinal strand of forgiveness never mind the judicial or moral strands? This attitude of respect is related to the capacity for tolerance. Tolerance does not truly accept the presence of the other but endures the proximity and presence of the other through gritted teeth. Likewise, respect is the pragmatic regard for the other with whom we must cooperate. We respectfully tolerate their presence and that which requires to be forgiven is not dealt with by the on-going attitudes that would stop any cooperation; they are merely suspended for the sake of political action. Forgiveness and repentance cannot be based on such pragmatic regard, for if they are to truly respect the other as the other who is my neighbour and may become my friend then forgiveness and repentance cannot be an expediency of Realpolitik, a ploy to pacify or bring the other 'on-side'. The Christian alternative to tolerance is charity, the generous and hospitable welcome and acceptance of the other, especially those who are suffering. Likewise, the Christian alternative to respect is an expression of Christian charity, which is love of the neighbour.

Arendt argues forcibly that forgiveness belongs to the household and not the political sphere. However, we have argued that the judicial and moral strands of forgiveness and repentance lift it into the political sphere. However,

given the specifically Christian elements of our account, does this restrict it to appear only in the community of the church?

Certainly, given the Church is an institution and community within society and appears and is observable as part of that wider society, Christian forgiveness ‘appears’ within the political sphere as it is practised in the Church, both between her members and in her interactions with those who have chosen not to be part of the Church. In this way Christian forgiveness enters the political sphere witnessing to the secular powers as to what true forgiveness is and its necessity as part of political life. Moreover, the world does not just passively observe the church, but given the church is dispersed as salt that seasons the world, “in sharing commonalities with our neighbours Christian ways overflow into the wider society,” and thus elements of Christian forgiveness form not just the moral landscape of our society but the legal and judicial systems as well<sup>603</sup>.

Peter, in his question to Jesus about forgiveness (Matt. 21:18), enquires what to do if ο αδελφος μου (another member of the church) sins against him. This highlights that forgiveness is not merely within the confines of a familial or household unit, but takes place in the public sphere in the politic of the church. Furthermore, the answer given to his question by Jesus is in the form of a parable about a king and his subjects that supports a reading that understands this as forgiveness in the public and therefore political sphere. This is not to say that there is no distinction between the body politic of the church and the wider

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<sup>603</sup> McClendon, *Ethics*, Nashville : Abingdon Press, 1986, p. 235.

body politic of society in general. This is a distinction that must be kept in view. But if we separate too sharply the ethic of forgiveness of the church from an ethic of forgiveness possible in the political sphere of the 'world' we minimise the witness of the church to the world and the providential and hidden work of the Spirit in aiding the world to become a world that is less hostile to the Lordship of Christ, and thus a world in which the 'new' of the new creation is already present and active.

The second way of understanding and answering our question is to state things rather differently and ask: 'Is forgiveness not a private matter, a matter between two private individuals, and thus non or pre-political?' This is where the judicial and moral strands of Christian forgiveness connect with the Metzian theme of memory. Forgiveness is the release of another from the rightful consequences of a wrong they have committed, and as such is a "special kind of remembrance"<sup>604</sup>. Thus, contrary to the popular saying about forgiving and forgetting, as a 'special kind of remembrance' Christian forgiveness brings into the open and names the wrong that has been committed in order that it may be forgiven. In doing so it does not abrogate or suspend justice, for it justly names the wrong as a wrong. Furthermore, to forget would be to ignore the lessons of history; we know not to touch a live flame because we remember feeling its heat when as a child we put our hand too close to the flame or burned our fingers on a candle. So too if wrongdoing is not to become "the basis for further engagements" there must be a remembering of wrongs that is proper to Christian

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<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, p225.

forgiveness<sup>605</sup>. Equally we can say we have forgotten the wrong done to us and remain at enmity with one another. The remembrance of wrongs proper to Christian forgiveness acknowledges “wrongs cannot be purely personal” and therefore must be part of our common remembering so we do not commit those wrongs and as an act of neighbour love protect society from those who fail to acknowledge wrongdoing as such and those who bring destruction and suffering to the communities in which they act. Therefore:

The notion that any *moral* transaction could proceed in absolute privacy is an illusion. Forgiveness will always have a measure of public reference, and the only question is how formal and institutionalized that is<sup>606</sup>.

The political character of the forgiveness in the church cannot be transposed *wholesale* to the world for it is only intelligible in the context of a community in submission to Christ as Lord and shaped by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Moreover this forgiveness cannot be transposed *wholesale* to the world for to do so would be to collapse the proper distinction between the earthly city and the heavenly city. Nevertheless, the political character of the forgiveness of the church does, and must, make an appearance in the world. It does so through its engagement and participation in wider society and in particular the institutions that form the secular political societies among whom it lives. The witness to God’s Paschal judgement, and the ethic of forgiveness expressed in Matthew 18, are thus an indirect witness by the church both gathered and dispersed.

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<sup>605</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgement*, p. 90.

<sup>606</sup> *Ibid*, p. 92

That New Testament accounts of forgiveness are linked to acts of healing and a practical demonstration of mercy strengthens our claim that forgiveness and repentance are important in any endeavour to relieve suffering and address its causes. In bringing Arendt and Metz together, albeit critically, we are able to develop the importance of forgiveness to a politics sensitive to suffering. Arendt rightly stresses the need for forgiveness to remove attitudinal impediments and heal relational ties if a body politic is to continue to act. Metz reminds us that we must take responsibility for that for which we may bear guilt and that adds to Arendt's account of forgiveness and the need for repentance. He also adds to and challenges Arendt's civic-humanist account of forgiveness by stressing the need for divine forgiveness. This divine forgiveness frees us from identities formed by wrong actions, which alienate us from ourselves and from each other. As sinners forgiven by God there are never merely oppressors and victims, but forgiven-and-repentant-oppressors and forgiven-and-healed-victims. Those who accept God's forgiveness open themselves to participate in a process of interhuman forgiveness in which they can be transformed by that forgiveness into people who are no longer at enmity but have become neighbours and friends.

## Chapter 8.

### Reconciling Suffering and Political Thought:

#### Charity and the public sphere.

##### The Rise of Solidarity and the demise of Charity.

In the nineteen eighties prominent Canadian theologian, and peritus at the Ecumenical Secretariat during Vatican II, Gregory Baum, commented that there has been an “outburst of compassion” in the Christian religion, an “explosion of solidarity”<sup>607</sup>. There are two important points for our thesis to note from Baum’s claim. Firstly, there is his conjoining of compassion and solidarity whereby to talk of compassion *is* to talk of solidarity. Therefore, if we are to talk of compassion and revivify it as a concept in a vision of political life based on belief tied intrinsically to a Christian understanding of charity we must, as it were, go through the contemporary penchant of talking about solidarity. Secondly, by championing the concept of solidarity and noting its ubiquity Baum typifies both post-Auschwitz political theology and Roman Catholic social teaching, both of which have influenced the vision of political life based on belief we have interacted with and the Christian Social Democrat tradition in mainland Europe. We shall seek to understand why this change has taken place with particular focus on the rise of solidarity as a concept within Catholic social teaching.

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<sup>607</sup> Baum, Gregory, *Compassion and Solidarity*, Toronto : House of Anansi Press Inc., 1987, 1992, p. 11, p. 87.

The starting point for the use of solidarity in ‘official’ Catholic teaching is Pius XII’s first Encyclical letter, *Summi Pontificatus* [1939]<sup>608</sup>. Prior to Pius XII the principle of solidarity is not explicitly named, and this raises questions regarding the novelty of solidarity in Catholic social teaching and its continuity with that which has gone before. Written when the “dread tempest of war is already raging,” the Pope was particularly concerned:

With the weakening of faith in God and Jesus Christ, and the darkening in men’s minds of the light of moral principles, there disappeared the indispensable foundation of the stability and quiet that internal and external, private and public order, which alone can support and safeguard the prosperity of States<sup>609</sup>.

As such the Pope looked to address the “spiritual and moral bankruptcy of the present day,” and the ensuing antipathy to, and loss of cohesion between, the peoples of Europe<sup>610</sup>. It is in this context that on four occasions he explicitly refers to solidarity. From the pen of Pius XII solidarity expresses the *de facto* reality that all people on earth are members of the “one great family”<sup>611</sup>. Hence he talks of our “forgetfulness” of this law and the need to recover a “consciousness of universal brotherhood”<sup>612</sup>. In reading *Summi Pontificatus* we note this very specific use and meaning attributed to solidarity and that this is not conflated with charity. Indeed Pius XII has more to say about charity in this encyclical than he does solidarity. The logic of his thinking seems to be that solidarity is our basic unity as peoples

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<sup>608</sup> “Starting with Pius XII ...the term *solidarity* is used ever more frequently and with ever broader meaning”. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Chp 4.160, [http://www\[dot\]www\[dot\]Vatican\[dot\]va](http://www[dot]www[dot]Vatican[dot]va), 2004, *Ftn* 421. Hereafter referred to as *CSDC*.

<sup>609</sup> Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus* 32, [http://www\[dot\]vatican\[dot\]va](http://www[dot]vatican[dot]va), 1939..

<sup>610</sup> Pius XII, *SP*, 21.

<sup>611</sup> *SP*., 37.

<sup>612</sup> *SP*., 35, 49.

arising from our “one common origin in God,” and the “equality of rational nature in all men”<sup>613</sup>. Charity while related to this ‘law’ of solidarity is not a *de facto* or *de jure* state but is something to be exercised, something that “calls for consideration of others and of their interests in the pacifying light of love”<sup>614</sup>. Charity is therefore about a sharing of gifts, “reciprocal interchange of goods ...mutual love”<sup>615</sup>. In other words, Pius articulates a fairly standard and traditional view of charity. Yet from this point forth, until *Caritas in Veritate* [2009], the concept of charity within Papal encyclicals and Catholic social teaching seems to almost disappear and be replaced with solidarity which comes to mean much more than simply human unity.

This rising prominence of the concept of solidarity is evidenced when we turn to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* which seeks to stress continuity in the teaching of the Church and its use of solidarity with that which has gone before. It highlights the central position of solidarity in Catholic social thought stating:

The permanent principles of the Church’s social doctrine constitute the very heart of Catholic social teaching. These are the principles of: the dignity of the human person, ....the common good; subsidiarity; and solidarity<sup>616</sup>.

To say that these are ‘permanent principles’ is a peculiarly interesting claim to make. As a post Vatican II document the *Compendium* should be seen as reflecting a postconciliar relationship of Church to the world in which there was

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<sup>613</sup> *SP.*, 38, 35.

<sup>614</sup> *SP.*, 40.

<sup>615</sup> *SP.*, 43.

<sup>616</sup> *CSDC*, 4.160.



“an even clearer awareness ...of the demands by Christ’s Gospel” in relation to social issues<sup>617</sup>. As such its inclusion of solidarity as a permanent principle is symptomatic of the trend, to which we draw attention, of the increasing prominence of this category in contemporary Catholic thought. Nevertheless, while Catholic thinkers have always given instruction about, and theologically reflected upon, the social sphere of life as a set of specific principles, this tradition is normally identified as starting with Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum* which has functioned as something of a *Urtext*. Indeed, Pope Pius XI notes that:

It cannot be rash to say that Leo’s encyclical has proved itself the *Magna Charta* upon which all Christian activity in the social field ought to be based, as on a foundation<sup>618</sup>.

Some thinkers, in particular Michael J Schuck, have argued for a pre-Leonine tradition of social teaching. Yet, this move only extends the tradition by another one hundred and fifty years as 1740 is seen as something of a starting point under Schuck’s thesis. Thus, this wider pre-Leonine tradition and the ‘official’ tradition flowing from *RN* are theologically speaking quite recent and represent the Church’s reaction to a negotiation of post-feudal world marked by intellectual, political, industrial, social, moral, and economic impulses radiating from the French Revolution, the rise of the State, an Enlightenment world view, and the industrial revolution.

The principles of the dignity of the human person and the common good do indeed have a long and prominent history in Catholic thought. Yet as we have noted solidarity is a ‘new’ principle, along with its partner subsidiarity

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<sup>617</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1.

<sup>618</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 39.

which makes its appearance in Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* of 1931. While antecedents may be found for subsidiarity, such as Leo's statement, "the law must not undertake more, nor go further, than is required for the remedy of the evil or the removal of the danger," this is not the full blown principle of subsidiarity and was not called such<sup>619</sup>. Thus in 1891 Leo merely anticipated what would be developed as subsidiarity, giving it, like solidarity, a recent coinage<sup>620</sup>. Not only are solidarity and subsidiarity linked by their relatively recent appearance as principles but structurally and intellectually they are also linked. Benedict XVI comments:

*The principle of subsidiarity must remain closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa, since the former without the latter gives way to social privatism, while the latter without the former gives way to paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need*<sup>621</sup>.

Thus while it is not our attention to do so here, any critique of the principle of solidarity necessitates a revaluation of subsidiarity and vice versa.

The second important point to note is that the *Compendium* was written under the direction and Papacy of the late John Paul II, with whom the concept of solidarity reaches an intensity and unparalleled prominence. Our main aim in this section has been to highlight the novelty of the principle of solidarity that

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<sup>619</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, 36.

<sup>620</sup> See Shannon, Thomas A., *Commentary on Rerum Novarum* in Himes, O.F.M., *Ibid.*, p. 141. Indeed in her commentary on *Quadragesimo anno* Christine Hinze states that subsidiarity is "among this encyclical's original contributions". Hinze, Christine Firer, *Commentary on Quadragesimo anno* in Himes, O.F.M., *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>621</sup> Pope Benedict XVI., *CV*, [http: // www\[dot\]vatican\[dot\]va](http://www[dot]vatican[dot]va), 2009., 58. Italics are original to the quote.

warrants our asking, ‘Why has this change occurred?’ and it is our assertion that John Paul II is integral to this change.

In 1981 Pope John Paul II published his encyclical on human work *Laborem Exercens* to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*<sup>622</sup>. Noted for being “the most comprehensive treatment of human work in the corpus of Catholic social teaching,” it is also notable for its use of the concept of *solidarity*<sup>623</sup>. It is not an insignificant fact that as John Paul was formulating *LE* a workers’ movement in his native Poland bearing the name Solidarity (*Soidarnosc*) was coming to prominence. This is not to claim a direct collation between the political situation in his homeland and his use of the term solidarity. Nevertheless, many have noted that behind his use of ‘solidarity,’ and thoughts on trade unionism, lay the socio-political events in Poland and in particular the Gdansk shipyards<sup>624</sup>. Indeed we know he communicated his support for the strikers’ demands to the Polish church, and wrote to Leonid Brezhnev leader of the Soviet Union “in which he stated his defence of Polish sovereignty and non-negotiable support for Solidarity” (*Solidarnosc*)<sup>625</sup>.

In his autobiography, Lech Walesa, the shipyard electrician who became leader of the Solidarity movement, notes that John Paul’s “teaching forced

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<sup>622</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, [http://www\[dot\]vatican\[dot\]va](http://www[dot]vatican[dot]va), 1981.

<sup>623</sup> Lamoureux, Patricia A., *Commentary on Laborem exercens*, in Himes, O.F.M., *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>624</sup> Baum, Gregory, *The Priority of Labour*, New York : Paulist Press, 1983, p. 74, Curran, Charles E., *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, Georgetown : Georgetown University Press, 2005, p. 217, Preston, Ronald, “Pope John Paul II on Work,” *Theology* 86, January 1983, pp. 19 – 24.

<sup>625</sup> Lamoureux, *Op. cit.*, p. 391.

cracks to form in the wall of totalitarianism” and that it would have been “hard to imagine that Solidarity would have survived without him”<sup>626</sup>. In 1981 Walesa was granted an audience with John Paul II in which the Pope made an “official” speech to the Solidarity delegation. Walesa notes:

In this same address, the Pope expressed certain ideas which were later formulated in the encyclical *Laborem exercens* ...I can say, therefore, that I was present at the birth of this document which points the way to some long-term solutions to the difficult problems of labour<sup>627</sup>.

This short digression into the relationship between Walesa and John Paul and their concept of solidarity suggests that during this period the use of solidarity within Catholicism reaches a new stage in its evolution and takes on a new theoretic and practical importance. However, it also highlights something that has been inherent in the term solidarity since its coinage, which is its highly politicised meaning.

It is beyond the scope of this present work to limn a genealogy of the concept of solidarity and its use. Here it is sufficient to note two points. First, as already stated, its use in Christian theology is relatively recent. Second, as a socio-political term it has its roots in the French Revolution and a critique of charity. There are antecedents for its modern usage in sources as diverse as the Christian idea of fraternity between friars and Napoleon’s transformation of the

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<sup>626</sup> Walesa, Lech, and Arkadiusz, Rybicki, *The Struggle and the Triumph: an Autobiography* (Trans. Franklin Philip and Helen Mahut), New York : Arcade Publishing, 1992, p. 190. It must be remembered regarding Walesa’s comment regarding cracks in the wall of totalitarianism that looking back, the birth of Solidarity in Poland in 1980 can be seen as part of a wider move in the communist countries of Europe culminating in the destruction of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet block.

<sup>627</sup> Walesa, Lech, *A Path of Hope: An Autobiography by Lech Walesa*, London : Pan Books, 1987., p. 165.

French legal concept of solidarity in his 1804 *Code Civil*<sup>628</sup>. Nevertheless, it was in the context “of the French Revolution that the modern concept of solidarity is forged”<sup>629</sup>. It is commonly accepted that the first person to elaborate systematically on the concept of solidarity was the French pantheistic philosopher Pierre Leroux in his 1840 *De l’Humanité*. Importantly for our discussion on solidarity and charity, his concept of solidarity was developed in no small measure as a critique of Christian charity. He objected to Christian charity on the ground it was “unable to reconcile self-love with the love of others, and for considering the love of others an obligation, and not the result of genuine interest in community with others”<sup>630</sup>. Furthermore, he argued that charity did not address or attend to issues of equality. We shall confront these arguments again when we consider contemporary objections to charity and the advocacy of solidarity.

This rootedness in the Revolution and its basis as a critique of Christian charity meant there was an initial reticence by the church and theology to take up the concept of solidarity. However, in the lead up to Vatican II and thereafter the Catholic church turns to address not only her subjects but “all men of good will”<sup>631</sup>. The increasing use of the concept of solidarity within Catholic teaching to the diminution of charity is part of this engagement with

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<sup>628</sup> Stjernø, Steinar, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 25 – 26.

<sup>629</sup> Hozel, Michael, *Recognizing the Sacrificial Victim: The problem of solidarity for critical social theory*, in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, Vol 6. No1., 2004, p. 51.

<sup>630</sup> Stjernø, *Ibid.*

<sup>631</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*.

and addressing of itself “to the whole of humanity”<sup>632</sup>. As we have noted, this advocacy of solidarity in Catholic teaching reaches a highpoint under the pontificate of John Paul II.

While *LE* discloses something of the relationship of solidarity as used in Catholic social teaching and a political and secular conception of the term, we must turn to the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* if we are to establish the breadth of the concept as it comes to be defined and expanded by Pope John Paul II. Its usage here most fully and faithfully relates to the explanations of solidarity in the *Compendium*. Here solidarity is not mere interdependence, but the latter “must be transformed into solidarity”<sup>633</sup>. In stating this, solidarity is disclosed as more than a “consciousness of universal brotherhood” as described by Pius XII, but a moral element is emphasised as solidarity is aligned to justice and equality. This recognition and acceptance of solidarity as a “moral category” transforms it into a “virtue”<sup>634</sup>. In order to state what solidarity is, John Paul defines it both negatively and positively. Negatively it is not a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes” of the other. Positively it is a “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good”, a losing of oneself for the “sake of the other instead of exploiting him” and as such “diametrically opposed” to the “structures of sin” that oppress and restrict the flourishing of people and the social, economic, cultural, and spiritual

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<sup>632</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.

<sup>633</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39.

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

development of poorer nations<sup>635</sup>. As a Christian virtue it takes on “the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation”<sup>636</sup>. We have noted the importance of forgiveness to a politics attentive to suffering in our previous chapter and John Paul’s inclusion here substantiates the claims we have already made. Furthermore, solidarity as the concrete expression of “love and service of the neighbour” is characterised by “the option or love of preference for the poor”<sup>637</sup>. The *Compendium* does not therefore use hyperbola when it notes that within Catholic social teaching “the term is used ever more frequently and with ever broader meaning”<sup>638</sup>.

We are broadly in agreement with the spirit and ethos of the Christian attitude and action that John Paul II is calling for, but question whether to call this solidarity and not Christian charity is to both import problematic concepts and to lose contact with the long and rich tradition of Christian charity as the appropriate Christ-like response to suffering in our world. This is not to suggest that a return to the older concept of Christian charity is unproblematic. We noted above the turn to an openness to the world by the Catholic Church was accompanied by a parallel increase in the use of the concept of solidarity. This has led to suggestions that a motivating factor in John Paul’s increasing use of solidarity was recognition of the need “to present Catholic theology and

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<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 42.

<sup>638</sup> *CSDC*, ftn. 421.

teaching in a more meaningful and attention-grabbing way for people today”<sup>639</sup>. The adoption of the language of solidarity seeks to be faithful to the missionary imperative of the church by translating spiritual truth into a medium understandable to those who have yet to consciously enter upon this ‘way’ of truth (Jn. 14.6). Curran, Himes O.F.M., and Shannon suggest that in this pragmatic move the late Pope found a term that bypassed “controversies of the past,” appealed to and is “understood well” by Catholics and ‘people of good will,’ and as such “[T]he meaning of solidarity is very clear for all”<sup>640</sup>. Our contention is that not only is the meaning of solidarity not clear for all, but that it is insufficient by itself to affect the desired change. Thus, while there may be “many points of contact between solidarity and charity” they are not synonymous<sup>641</sup>. There is a tacit acknowledgment of this in *SRS* as it states: “In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go *beyond* itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension”<sup>642</sup>. This specifically Christian dimension is, we shall contest, charity. While the adoption of solidarity for the sake of mission and other pragmatic reasons is understandable we fear that more is lost than is gained in this move. Solidarity rather than making smooth the rugged ground in preparing a way (Is. 40: 3 – 5) for charity, metaphorically forms a plateau from which it is difficult to escape and move onto genuine Christian charity.

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<sup>639</sup> Curran, Himes, Shannon, *Commentary on Sollicitudo rei socialis* in Himes, O.F.M., *Ibid.*, p. 429.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>641</sup> *SRS*, 40.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.* Italics in quote are not original but our emphasis.



Arendt argues that the love necessary for charity cannot appear within the political sphere as this would dissolve that sphere. Love and charity must therefore appear indirectly and transmute into respect and appear as solidarity. When this Arendtian concern regarding love in the public sphere is married to varying critiques of charity based on concerns regarding justice and equality we uncover a dynamism that contributes to the declining use of charity and the rise of solidarity as a theological category.

Prominent theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, like Arendt, argued that love as charity, benevolence or philanthropy, cannot enter the political sphere. For him love could not enter the political sphere because relationships between groups are political and not ethical: “they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses”<sup>643</sup>. Thus for reasons different to Arendt, Niebuhr consigns the love necessary for charity to the private sphere. Relations that require social co-operation larger than that of a kinship group require “careful calculation” of a sort that leaves love “baffled”<sup>644</sup>. He therefore laments: “many absurdities ...have been done in the name of religious philanthropy”<sup>645</sup>.

Niebuhr furthermore observes what Marx called a “bribe of the workers” in order to pacify them and make their “position tolerable for the moment”

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<sup>643</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Louisville : Westminster John Knox Press, 1932, 2001, p. xxxi.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*

without attending to the underlying issues of injustice and inequality<sup>646</sup>. Niebuhr asserts that the “powerful are more inclined to be generous than to grant social justice,” for even “the slightest gestures of philanthropy hide social injustice” from the liberal Protestantism he is critiquing<sup>647</sup>. We do not stretch his comments beyond what they can interpretively bear when we state his critique highlights the issue of how charity, justice and equality relate. Here, equality is not restricted to possessions or financial equity, but given his comments on coercion, injustice and inequality have to do with power and lack of agency.

In this critique, charity in its philanthropic form aims at assuaging situations of poverty and suffering rather than transforming the underlying issues that give rise to poverty and suffering. The coercive relations of power are maintained by benevolent acts, imbalances of power are not addressed and neither is the imbalance of possessions, for the impulse “to grant to others what they claim for themselves” remains unchanged<sup>648</sup>. The rich and powerful remain the rich and powerful and the suffering and poor remain in their poverty and suffering. Charity, on Niebuhr’s observations, fails to bring about the change, which is needed as it momentarily changes circumstances – Marx’s tolerable for the moment – rather than transforming subjects, and the contingent circumstances that impinge upon subjects robbing them of agency.

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<sup>646</sup> Marx, Karl, *Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League (1850)*, in Elster, Jon (ed), *Karl Marx: A Reader*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 270.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80, p. 127.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

A reason for this lack of efficacy, Timothy Gorringer would argue, is that charity does not address the issue of property and an equitable distribution of material goods. He clearly states: “Charity rests on inequalities of possession which abstract from the injustice by which riches are acquired”<sup>649</sup>. In other words, justice is not served by our charitable sharing of what we believe to be ours with those who have less than we have. He argues that what is required is not charity but the redefining of property. He states that property is “both gift and trust” and as such what we possess is for the common good rather than “private gain”<sup>650</sup>. A systemic change is therefore called for in which, to quote St. Augustine, we “Seek sufficiency, seek what is enough, and more do not seek” rather than a piecemeal charity that only ever has the few and not the many in view<sup>651</sup>.

The critique of charity encountered in such diverse thinkers as Marx, Niebuhr or Gorringer finds popular expression in a rejection of charity and the embrace of solidarity. Celebrated Uruguayan journalist and writer Eduardo Galeano typifies this in his statement:

I don’t believe in charity. I believe in solidarity. Charity is so vertical. It goes from the top to the bottom. Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person<sup>652</sup>.

In contrasting the ‘vertical’ element of charity with the respect of the other in solidarity Galeano reflects Niebuhr’s comments on power and charity as a form

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<sup>649</sup> Gorringer, Timothy J., *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>651</sup> Augustine, quoted in Gorringer, *Ibid.*

<sup>652</sup> Galeano, Eduardo, quoted by Barsamian, David in *Progressive*, Jul99, Vol. 63, Issue 7, 1999, pp. 35 – 7.

of sentimentality or pity that does not look the other in the eye as an equal but looks down upon the other. We have already noted in Arendt the difference between pity and respect, and charity as described by Niebuhr seems to have more to do with placating one's conscience than it does with recognising the other as of equal humanity and dignity before God and thus as a person worthy of love that is not sentimentalism but is transformative and respectful. As such solidarity consciously carries with it the aim of not just bringing compassion to those who suffer but of transforming the material situation(s) that accompany, contribute to, and cause such suffering. This is in contrast to the view that charity is merely palliative and neglects transforming the material conditions related to and causing suffering, and therefore lacks the apocalyptic militancy and urgency of solidarity.

The issue of justice conjoins with an egalitarian impulse present in much of contemporary theology and political thought that further emboldens the critique of charity. Whether this is a critique of the 'right' as in Niebuhr, or the 'left' as in Marx or Gorringer, there is a consensus that charity is a relation between unequals. Galeano prosaically states, with charity "the giving hand is always above the receiving hand" with the consequence that it is "humiliating"<sup>653</sup>. In contrast solidarity is depicted as a respectful relationship between equals. The egalitarian thrust of solidarity challenges those whom Metz includes within the bourgeoisie and bourgeois Christianity to, in solidarity with the poor and suffering, radically change

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<sup>653</sup> Galeano, Eduardo, quoted by Birnbaum, Robert in *Interview with Eduardo Galeano* in [http: // www\[dot\]identitytheory\[dot\]com](http://www[dot]identitytheory[dot]com).

how they live. Comfort, security, power and privilege require to be laid aside if solidarity is to be realised as a relationship of equals. For Metz this means a revivification of the *Evangelical Counsels* of poverty, celibacy and obedience<sup>654</sup>.

We are therefore concerned with the dominance the concept of solidarity has assumed within much contemporary Christian thought as the basis for compassion. Our concern rests on the considerable political and ideological baggage that may be imported by using this concept. Questions thus arise as how solidarity should be understood as a component in a Christian understanding of compassion in the political sphere. We are further concerned that solidarity is brought forward in preference to an idea of charity, a move that we consider obnubilates the simple biblical understanding that compassion has its roots and draws its strength and energy from love of God and love of neighbour. It seems that the relatively recent category and practice of solidarity seeks to usurp and distinguish itself from the ancient practice and understanding of Christian charity. However, charity and solidarity are intrinsically linked, given solidarity is a specific outworking of the fundamental principle of charity. It is this connection between solidarity and charity that requires to be recovered as well as the concept of charity itself.

Solidarity as conceived by Metz seeks to be an expression of compassion and a means to relieve suffering. Key to this is the empowerment of the

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<sup>654</sup> Metz, *FC*, pp. 47 – 71.

suffering person so they can move from a position of non-identity to that of a subject-capable-of-agency. The question arises however, whether solidarity with its modern development as a political alternative to charity (Arendt), or as a substitute for charity (Lerous), is capable of performing as Metz wants it to. Do Arendt and Metz mean the same when they talk of solidarity?

That we ask this question of Arendt and Metz exposes that different fundamental convictions inescapably lead to differences in values. The values encapsulated in Arendt's and Metz's conceptions of solidarity differ because their fundamental convictions differ. Arendt advocates solidarity as the means by which love may be kept out of the political sphere. Metz antithetically understands solidarity as the appropriate practical response to the 'wordless cry' of those who suffer and whom we should love. Implicitly Metz's understanding of solidarity takes its bearings from Christ's instruction to care for the least among us and accordingly it is an expression of the fundamental principle of Christian charity. If solidarity is not to function as a means to disbar love from the political sphere then its relationship to charity needs to be acknowledged.

In the political sphere the final sentence of Marx and Engels *The Communist Manifesto* commonly forms the paradigmatic expression of solidarity: "Working men of all countries, unite"<sup>655</sup>. This expression of solidarity represents the organisation of one group in comradeship – often socioeconomically defined - in conflict and opposition to another group. For

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<sup>655</sup> Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), p. 52

Marx and Engels this was the solidarity of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. We might describe this solidarity as 'sectional' given it brings together one section of society against another. This sectionality highlights an issue with solidarity that has become detached from charity. Separated from this controlling principle solidarity takes its bearings from those who are like us. To understand what kind of solidarity is proposed, or what kind of solidarity we encounter, we must ask who it regards as 'the other'. Solidarity, if it is to be a practical response to the cry of those who suffer, cannot be of this sectional variety. That does not mean it will not resemble 'class treason' as Metz noted, but that it will seek to surmount social and economic categories along with religious, ethnic or gender differences that are used to exclude. To differentiate itself from such sectional solidarity this Christian variety is characterised by the option of love or preference for the poor. The poor, by virtue of their suffering, make a special claim on us, they confront us as "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40). There are therefore particular solidarities that can and justifiably should be formed, but these arise from an understanding of charity. Solidarity, if it is to appear in the political sphere as solidarity of those who have with those who have not, must anchor itself in an understanding of charity.

It would be remiss to detail the rise of solidarity and demise of charity without commenting on Benedict XVI's first encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est* and its companion *Caritas in Veritate*. Together these two encyclicals mark a nascent renewed return to charity within Catholic social doctrine, and a repositioning of the category of solidarity. Thus, while stressing his and Paul VI's continuity with

the Church's social magisterium, these documents mark a significant change from what has been taught in the period between these two popes. Without explicitly disagreeing with the new meaning and emphasis solidarity gained under John Paul II, by returning to Paul VI's *SRS* and stating it "deserves to be considered 'the *Rerum Novarum* of the present age'", Benedict repatriates solidarity to its meaning in *SRS*, which we previously discussed. Furthermore, in emphasising the social teaching of Paul VI he brings to the fore once more the integral humanism of Jacques Maritain and his theological and philosophical framework<sup>656</sup>.

Benedict's approach in some aspects mirrors and complements that which we seek to develop in this thesis. Two points are worth highlighting. In *DCE* he draws our attention to the importance of the Eucharist for the social character of charity. He notes that "[C]ommunion draws me out of myself towards him [that is Christ] and thus also towards unity with all Christians"<sup>657</sup>. To this we shall add that in remembering 'rightly' at the Eucharistic table we are reminded of our communion to all persons given Christ in his election as God's messiah is representative of all humankind.

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<sup>656</sup> In stating this we are not suggesting that John Paul's personalism was not influenced by Maritain; it clearly was. We merely suggest that the influence of Maritain, and in particular integral humanism, is stronger with Paul VI, and Benedict's championing of Paul's social teaching revives Maritain's integral humanism.

<sup>657</sup> Benedict XVI, *DCE*, .14.



Secondly, in *CV* Benedict describes what he calls “the institutional path” of charity<sup>658</sup>. By this he means that charity is mediated via the institutions of the *polis*. We highlight this aspect of *CV* not merely because it supports an understanding of charity that validates its appearance in the public realm, but also because the idea of mediating structures is one we shall develop in our reading of the Good Samaritan.

#### Understanding Charity – A Consideration of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29 – 37).

In order to develop our understanding of compassion in the political sphere as an act of charity, we turn to the parable of *The Good Samaritan* as found in the gospel of Luke 10:29 – 37. In turning to this passage we seek to go beyond a minimalist or ‘literal’ interpretation that gives us only one instruction: ‘the one to whom you show compassion is your neighbour’. Rather, following in the tradition of Ambrose of Milan, Origen, Irenaeus, and in particular Augustine of Hippo, we offer a ‘spiritual’ reading, and with this seek to illuminate a theo-political dimension to the parable. This is not to reject a reading that concludes that ‘the one to whom we show compassion is our neighbour,’ but includes this important instruction in a reading which eschews attempts to exclude this from the political sphere, consigning it to an individualistic private morality.

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<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, CV. .7.

In *Sermo CCXCIX* Augustine states that the person asking ‘who is my neighbour’ (Lk 10:29), expected a certain reply.

He thought the Lord should say, ‘Your father and your mother, your wife, your children, your brothers, your sisters.’ This was not his answer; rather, he wanted to teach that every human being was a neighbour to every other human being<sup>659</sup>.

We start with this for it directly speaks to Arendt’s theory that compassion and charity must remain within the confines of the family or household. Augustine argues that Christ’s parable teaches us that there are necessities for the preservation of bodily life that are not confined to the familial sphere and thus compassion and charity enter the public sphere. This is significant given Augustine’s intellectual, cultural, and historical proximity to the sources Arendt is so reliant upon for her view of the political. Here we have a thinker from the ancient world, well versed in its philosophy and living in a culture not too far removed from ancient Greece and its *polis*, who presents a very different picture to that painted by Arendt. Of course, Augustine does not address this issue as a philosopher but as a ‘father of the Church,’ and this makes all the difference. As we noted in our last chapter, the teaching of Jesus and the formation of eschatological communities embodying the teaching of the kingdom of God and exemplifying this in their living, transformed the understanding of household for the Christian. The household is no longer defined as delimited by biology, proximity (living under the one roof), or economic necessity or production. The household are those who are *in* Christ and, given that Christ in his representative function includes all of human kind, those who have not yet

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<sup>659</sup> Augustine, quoted in Teske, Roland, *The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29 – 37) in Augustine’s Exegesis* in Fleteren and Schnaubelt (Eds.), *Augustine : Biblical Exegete*, Peter Lang Publishing Inc. : New York, 2001, 2004, p. 348.

‘objectively’ entered this household must be treated as ‘subjective’ members of it. This takes us to Augustine’s spiritual and Christological reading of the parable.

This spiritual interpretation of scripture aims at a practical reading of the text. It asks not so much what the text means but how this text reveals God’s purposes and demonstrates them through His acts in history. Our reading therefore asks how this text instructs us to love God with all that we are, and to love our neighbour so that in doing so they may find wholeness in God and we through our neighbour may love God. Our spiritual interpretation thus seeks to build up our understanding of charity in the knowledge that:

If one errs with an interpretation that builds up charity, ...one errs like one who leaves the road by mistake and crosses through the countryside to the very spot to which the road leads<sup>660</sup>.

Augustine’s reading of the parable transforms it from a morality tale to a compendium of the gospel and can be summarised as follows. The human race lies robbed, battered and dying, but is rescued and healed by the Samaritan who is revealed as Christ.<sup>661</sup> The parable depicts the movement from fall, incarnation to healing and redemption by God. The human race battered and dying is led by Christ to the inn: “that is, the Church” where we might be cared for till his return<sup>662</sup>.

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<sup>660</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book1, Chapter 36.41

<sup>661</sup> Teske, *Op.cit.*, p. 350.

<sup>662</sup> Augustine, *Psalm CXXVI.II*, *St Augustine: Exposition on the Book of Psalms*, NPNF 1 – 08, [http:// www\[dot\]ccel\[dot\]org](http://www[dot]ccel[dot]org).

In our reading Jerusalem retains its Augustinian meaning as the heavenly city. Jericho represents not just our mortality as in Augustine but the realm of human affairs in the plane of the earthly city. With this basic structure we are not suggesting a radical spatial distinction between the heavenly and earthly city. There is only one ‘world’ in which the two cities are, two realities in the one sphere of God’s love, reconciliation, and redemption through the Son of all that He created. We therefore broadly subscribe to the Augustinian dictum that “in this present world” the two cities are “mixed together and, in a certain sense, entangled with one another”<sup>663</sup>. The entanglement of the heavenly and earthly discloses that the world in which we live is a mixture of good and evil. The parable does not seek to explain the origin or continued existence of evil, represented here by the acts of robbery and violence, and this bolsters our view that theodicy as an explanation of evil and the justification of God in the face of suffering is a wrong-headed project.

Indeed, the priest and the Levite who walk by in silence represent in our reading traditional theodicies that seek to explain evil and suffering. By passing in silence our representatives of theodicy are superior to Job’s comforters in this regard – they do not heap further misery upon the suffering man by seeking to explain his suffering. In this sense theodicy by walking by in silence acts rightly for it has nothing that will aid the dying traveller lying injured on the road. Theodicy, as an explanation of evil and suffering in this present age, fails in its attempt at a rational justification of a good and caring God in the face of the

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<sup>663</sup> Augustine, *CDC*, Bk. XI.1

existence and on-going action of evil. Such theodicy alights on three outcomes. It either firstly, concludes that this world with its evil and suffering is nevertheless the 'best of all possible worlds God could have chosen', (Leibniz)<sup>664</sup>. Or, secondly, that flowing towards its realisation in the Absolute, evil and suffering are sublated by a negation of the negative (Hegel). Both these theories instrumentalise evil and suffering so that "often an evil brings forth a good whereto one would not have attained without that evil"<sup>665</sup>. They are thus conducive to an acquiescence that breeds apathy towards the sinful systems and structures that are the source of much suffering and complicit in its continuation. They therefore breed political apathy and the maintenance of the status quo. The third outcome theodicy alights upon is, as noted with Jonas and Moltmann in Chapter 3, a diminution in the attributes of God. All three of these accounts by their explanatory physiognomy become, albeit unconsciously or unwittingly, allied with the self-justification mechanisms of the earthly city that refuse to accept God's demonstration of power in this world in the contradictory terms of weakness, humility, and servitude. All three are inattentive to the power of resurrection that has entered history and is at work in the new creation at present hidden in the old. As such they flirt with idolatry as they make God in 'our image' and in this way maintain the rebellious power structures of this age, disclosing a complicity with the fallen powers of this world, with the "power of

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<sup>664</sup> "God, having chosen the most perfect of all possible worlds, had been prompted by his wisdom to permit the evil which was bound up with it, but which still did not prevent this world from being, all things considered, the best that could be chosen". Leibniz, G.W., *Theodicy*, Chicago : Open Court, 1985, p. 67.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

darkness” that fights against and refuses its “transfer” to the kingdom of the “beloved Son” (Col. 1:13).

The actions of the priest and the Levite are in contrast to the arrival of the neighbour. Their muteness in the face of suffering is shattered, their nihilism is interrupted by his appearance and actions. In our reading the identity of the neighbour is not Christ, but more broadly the neighbour represents those active in the world who are “new creations” (2 Cor. 5:17), those who have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13) and participate in the transformational and comforting work of the Spirit. The identity of the good neighbour as a Samaritan would have shocked and surprised the original hearers of the parable. Likewise, we must be open to a surprise, another shock, the neighbour’s identity as a Samaritan suggests. That is, he is from outwith the religious-ethnic boundaries *we* have drawn regarding who God can and cannot use to outwork His purposes. This opens the possibility that those who participate in the transformational and comforting work of the Spirit may be those whom we would consider to be outwith the church. Elsewhere in the Gospels Jesus warns that those who assume they know him and do his bidding err in their presumption. It is those who unwittingly operate in the charity of the kingdom that are about his business and who are called “blessed,” inheriting the kingdom prepared for them (Matt. 25:34).

This is an important if contentious point as it broadens the work of the Spirit beyond the confines of the visible church to include within its scope those

‘people of goodwill’ who unknowingly minister the Spirit’s comfort. This is not to dilute the importance of the church, its unique role as witness to God’s redeeming work, or its function as a community-developing-Christ-likeness through its worship of Father, Son, and Spirit. Nor is it to lapse into a form of Pelagianism or works righteousness. The good we are able to do is done *in* and *through* the enabling of the Spirit. What distinguishes the neighbour from the other characters of the parable, from those inhabitants of the earthly city, is that he is filled (εσπλαγχνισθη) with compassion (Lk. 10:33)<sup>666</sup>. The transitive verb ‘filled’ is important as to be filled requires the ‘pouring in’ of something that is external to the object that is filled. Thus, we understand this not merely to be a welling up of human sentiment or emotion, but as the acting upon our sentiment and emotion by the Spirit who fills us with compassion. The introduction of the neighbour who is filled with compassion announces that a decisive change has taken place in the earthly city as that was his destination before his encounter with the injured man. In this world in which the two cities are entangled the earthly city is opened up to new possibilities given Christ’s resurrection and triumph over the powers of this present age who seek to set the earthly city at odds with its ordering to the heavenly city. The earthly city remains earthly; it is not and should not be conflated with the heavenly city. Yet new possibilities are realisable within the earthly city because of the Christ event.

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<sup>666</sup> Here we disagree with the translators of The New Revised Standard Version of the New Testament who render the end of verse 33, “he was moved with pity”. As we have noted, pity and compassion are related but distinct affections / sentiments. In our opinion the verse should read “he was filled with compassion”.

The actions of the good neighbour take place between Jerusalem and Jericho, in between the two realities that are the earthly and heavenly cities. In being located upon the open road the action of the narrative is not restrictively interpreted as relating exclusively to either the heavenly or earthly city. That it takes place in such an open place indicates that the decisive change wrought by God in the incarnation of his Christ is not restricted to personal transformation, but the transformation of the realm of human affairs. The metaphor of road also discloses an important if rather obvious feature: we are on a journey. It is as we are active in journeying with Christ – following him – that we come across those who need his care. But journey and the image of an inn, a temporary place of dwelling, also remind us that to act upon suffering and its causes is always a penultimate act; it is not the ultimate healing Christ will bring at his coming.

This concept that God's redeeming work in the person of Christ is not confined to personal transformation but includes the public space and therefore that the incarnation is fundamental to our understanding of the public space is one that was developed by Chenu to whom we turned in our discussion of Christian freedom<sup>667</sup>. He argues that society is included in God's work of redemption in the incarnation because:

if God is to take flesh to render man divine, He must take *all* in man, the highest and lowest in his nature, the social factors as well as the individual. Anything which remained outside would not be redeemed and freed<sup>668</sup>.

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<sup>667</sup> It is not our intent here to invoke or validate Niebuhr's Christ and Culture thesis. We would thus see our proposal as distinct from that thesis.

<sup>668</sup> Chenu, O.P., M.D., *Christian Liberty and Obligation*, in *Blackfriars*, Vol. 20, Issue 230, 1939, p. 340.



For Chenu this meant that the two injunctions, love of God and love of neighbour, are reflective of the incarnation. “We can accept therefore no sort of disjunction of the personality and the social,” but must bear witness to the sanctifying work of God in the world because “God came incarnate among men”<sup>669</sup>.

It may be argued that Chenu is talking about ‘society,’ a *natural* association of people and to equate this with the political would be to collapse an important distinction. We agree that this is an important distinction to maintain, but these spheres, realms, or spaces must not be held so separated one from the other that the relatedness of the spheres is lost sight of. The question arises, however, as to what Chenu refers to when he talks of ‘society’. Does he mean civil society as distinct from military society or ecclesial society, as distinct from political society or the society of the household? We do not think this is his intent. We conclude this because his chief concern is to surmount the antinomy between public and private obligation, and overcome any ‘disjunction of the personality and the social’. Here we take social to mean our common world that includes all our various relations. Thus we deem his use of social and society to include the political, the public or civil space and the private realm of the household. Christ has come to redeem them all and as such Christian charity is active in all these spheres no matter what our conception or definition of them is.

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<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 335 - 336.

We now turn to the last element of the parable, the Samaritan taking the injured traveller to the inn and the role of the innkeeper. Augustine concluded that this inn was the Church and the innkeeper the Apostle charged with the care of all 'travellers' until Christ's return.

The inn, if ye recognise it, is the Church. In the time present, an inn, because in life we are passing by: it will be a home, whence we shall never remove, when we shall have got in perfect health unto the kingdom of heaven<sup>670</sup>.

Notwithstanding the appeal of this ecclesial reading we seek to broaden out Augustine's analogy. What if we conceive of the inn not as the Church but as the temporal mediating structures of the world? In this scenario the inn would be the institutions both formal and informal that provide for, and meet, those needs that cannot or have not been met in the private sphere. Included in those institutions would be those regulatory bodies that seek to 'care' for people by reminding corporations, markets and the like of their social responsibilities and of limiting the power often expressed by greed of companies. Thus the inn represents those institutions both of provision and of restraint that seek to provide for the common good and maintain or restore the dignity of the human person. The innkeeper is symbolic of the governance of these various institutions. The innkeeper is not to be equated merely with the state, but rather, with those formal (i.e. the state), and informal (i.e. NGO's etc.), political bodies that resource and bring vision and governance to the institutions to whom and for whom they are responsible.

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<sup>670</sup> Augustine, *Sermon LXXXI.6*

We therefore suggest that the inn and the innkeeper need not only be understood ecclesiastically, but could represent mediating institutions who minister the love of God to those in need of aid. In making this move we find a myriad of practical examples through church history that serve to illustrate what we suggest. The birth of the hospital with the establishment of the Basileias around 369 C.E. by Basil the Great in Caesarea is testimony to the long-standing tradition of Christian charity active in intermediary structures. Basil's Basileias did not replace ecclesial or monastically based charitable foundations, such as the monastic infirmary, or institutions for "orphans (*orphanotropheia*), foundlings (*brephotropheia*), the aged (*gerontokomeia*), lepers (*keluphokmeia*), and poor travellers (*xenodocheia*)"<sup>671</sup>. So we are not suggesting that mediating structures and institutions need be non-ecclesial or para-ecclesial. Structures that mediate charity like the inn in the parable may be direct functions of a church or churches, may be a partnership between a church and other organisations or may be independent of formal and direct church input. As we noted, given the good neighbour was a Samaritan and not say a Jerusalemite indicates that those, including structures, who participate in the transformational, palliative and healing work of the Spirit may be those whom we consider to be outwith the church.

It is the Samaritan, his eyes opened by charity, who sees and attends to the injured traveller. In this sense to see is more than to observe, but is to know what one should do, how one should respond to what is observed. Yet this initial

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<sup>671</sup> Ferngreen, Gary B., *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity*, Baltimore : The John Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 124.

response requires to be complemented by the palliative care and transformative puissance that can be found at the inn. The Samaritan who exemplifies the charity of the heavenly city avails himself of the resources of the inn and the innkeeper. Political freedom on its own is not enough to establish a social realm of justice and peace in which people flourish, and suffering – as far as is possible this side of the Eschaton – is minimised. As Pope Paul VI reminds us: “social and economic structures are also needed” <sup>672</sup> . These ‘structures’ are the institutions we have referred to.

Yet, likewise, on their own these resources – of institutions, their structures and governance, the people who make them work – are insufficient to provide the care required for the injured traveller, for those who suffer in our world. Being in accordance with ‘man’s nature and activity’ acknowledges that by nature humankind is not sinful, is not obsessively self-loving, and affirms God’s exclamation that by nature man and woman were “very good” (Gen. 1:31). However, we must account for the reality of sin, and our sinfulness. Thus, without entering into debates surrounding ‘what’ was ‘lost’ in ‘the fall,’ it is sufficient to acknowledge the reality of sin in our present age and that we act imperfectly in accordance with our good nature. Just as the world is a mixture of the two cities so our good nature has become entangled with sin: and while we through Christ may loose ourselves from this entanglement (Heb. 12:1), we easily become ensnared again and struggle to live in a state of complete freedom. Aware of this predicament, aware of this lack, the Samaritan imbues the inn and

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<sup>672</sup> Pope Paul VI, *PP.*, 6.

innkeeper with the acuity and love of charity so the innkeeper knows and sees for whom he has to care and is equipped so that this care rises above civic or supererogatory philanthropy. Seeing and knowing for whom we care is important if they are to be seen and known as persons and not as 'clients,' 'statistics,' 'a problem,' or whatever impersonal noun we may attribute to those who suffer. In this way such institutions endowed with the heavenly gift of two denarii (Lk. 10:35) rise above perfunctoriness and are active in providing genuine care and healing. Furthermore, this genuine care and healing is not restricted to the symptoms and injuries presented by the traveller but must also address the cause(s) of those symptoms and injuries. There is no split between the care for the person and the context in which that person was injured. To care for the person means in concert with that care to seek the transformation of the conditions that were a factor or cause in their suffering. In this way charity always has a political aspect to it.

When we examined contemporary critiques of charity we encountered the view that charity did not sufficiently respect 'the other' and placed the 'giver' in a position of power over the one who receives. This view has some basis in reality; however, we wrongly designate this phenomenon if we call it charity. This is supererogatory or civic philanthropy and is not synonymous with charity, as we have described it. The predominance of understanding charity in its supererogatory or civic form is in no small matter due to the 'charity industry'. This is not to say such philanthropy does not have its place, but it must not be confused with a vigorous and fully developed concept of Christian charity. With

this confusion in mind we have sympathy for John Paul II's pragmatic decision to prefer solidarity to charity. Yet this confusion is not solely due to the charity industry but also a wrong view of freedom and human autonomy, a matter that we have already spent considerable time discussing (Chapter 6). Timothy Jackson rightly comments:

Because we *rhetorically* value self-determination (if not self-sufficiency) so highly, we find it hard to picture an active and engaged charity that does not render the giver unduly encumbered or the receiver unduly dependent<sup>673</sup>.

We may add that this hyper-valuing of self-determination expressed in a fragmented individualism means we find it hard to picture charity that does not render the giver superior and detached from the receiver who remains in a position of powerlessness. True charity does not operate in, or seek to maintain, such power structures but takes seriously the instruction to “encourage one another and *build up* each other” (1 Thes. 5:11 *emphasis added*). Charity does not seek to subjugate or pacify those who are suffering and powerless. Rather, charity as neighbour-love has in view a goal for those who are the recipients of its love, that they may be built up.

So far we have emphasised that Christ is our neighbour and when we act as he did we act as a neighbour. The Samaritan showed himself to be a neighbour and demonstrated what neighbour-love is by his non-discriminatory compassion. Kierkegaard comments:

Christ does not speak about recognising one's neighbour but about being a neighbour oneself ...something the Samaritan showed by his

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<sup>673</sup> Jackson, Timothy P., *The Priority of Love*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 50 – 51.

compassion. By this he did not prove that the assaulted man was his neighbour but that he was a neighbour of the one assaulted<sup>674</sup>.

However, when Christ gives the second part of his reply to the lawyer in Matthew 22:35 – 40, the neighbour to be loved is that neighbour who is beside me. Thus, in this regard, the one we come across assaulted on the Jericho road is not a stranger or a traveller, but in being a neighbour to him he is also our neighbour. This designation of neighbour takes precedence over all other social relations and categories. Neighbour-love, if it is love that flows from our love of God, does not recognise the one to whom we have been hostile, or the one who is hostile or even persecutes us, as an enemy, but as our neighbour (Matt. 5:43 – 48). Likewise, neighbour-love in accepting and treating all who are the object of this love in equal regard does not act from a position of superiority, but treats the neighbour as the one whom we can come along side because he is beside us and not a lower being. Our neighbour-love is thus universal in its compass and does not discriminate between friend and foe, deserving or undeserving. Charity is not the upper hand giving to the lower. This universality should not lead to an abstract notion of love but must take practical form with the first person it sees to whom we should be a neighbour.

We conclude that compassion, expressed as Christian charity, is the initiative of the Holy Spirit and is primarily expressed through the everyday acts of Christ's disciples both gathered as the church and dispersed as salt to season the world in which we live. Given this last statement, compassion expressed as

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<sup>674</sup> Kierkegaard, Søren, *Works of Love* (Trans. Howard and Edna Hong), Harper Collins : New York, 2009, p. 38

charity is not confined to those who claim to follow Jesus of Nazareth, but it works in and with individuals, communities, and institutions, and thus makes its appearance positively in the public and political realms. The sentiment of compassion as a response to suffering can manifest itself politically working with freedom and in doing so strengthens our common world and the bonds of human fellowship essential if this common world is to be a peaceful world. The thought that charity can work with freedom returns us to the issue of necessity and Arendt's concerns that this destroys freedom.

In chapter six we examined the 'problem' of necessity, drawing upon the thoughts of Arendt. There we outlined her account of necessity noting her claims of its damaging effect on the political sphere and that this hypothesis commends itself to our common sense. For Arendt necessity pushes us, drives us, its urgency destroying the space and time to investigate, deliberate, persuade, and decide. In that chapter we focused on the relationship of necessity to freedom and in particular a Christian understanding of freedom in the political sphere. There we showed that given our freedom is in God and our neighbour, attending to the needs – the necessity of their claims upon us – is not inimical to freedom. Given this reconciliation of necessity to freedom its appearance in public does not destroy the political sphere. This thesis has been advanced in our present chapter by our consideration of Christian charity.

Having argued that charity can and should appear in the political sphere we propose a form of necessity, what we may term Christian necessity, as proper



to the political realm. The necessity Arendt fears will enter and overwhelm the political sphere is objective reality in an oppressive form; it confronts us so immediately that it allows no space to comprehend it. The Christian political realm admits objective reality reflectively, thus necessity in this form does not close off our understanding, but we are able to 'stand back' from it and comprehend it and embrace it. This capacity to reflect arises from our vision of the past and the future; it arises from the categories of memory and eschatology. We remember those who have suffered, we remember that Christ suffered and died, yet we also remember God's actions within history: he comforts those in need, he raised Christ from death. So in faith we understand reality as it confronts us in the light that God will once again act in our favour. Eschatology informs our understanding of the kingdom of God and shapes our perception of reality as it confronts us so we may in hope imagine a better world. Not that we claim in visioning and working for a better world that we are building the kingdom, but merely that we work towards it, build for it, anticipate it. The Eschaton comes towards us and brings clarity and definition to our present reality rather than our defining what the Eschaton should be.

Becoming a people capable of Charity: The role of the Eucharist in our response.

The categories of memory and eschatology come together in the ritual meeting of expectation and memory in the celebration of the Eucharist. In gathering around the Lord's Table and participating in an act of both remembrance and eschatological hope our perception of the world, as we

encounter in the immediacy of its oppressive necessity, is transformed by the reflective perspective established at the Table. The ordinance of Eucharist is therefore important in forming a “Eucharistic community” in which dangerous memories are sustained and where we discover and are reminded from where our sustenance comes<sup>675</sup>. Encountering the ‘bread of life’ (Jn. 6:35) reminds us from where our nourishment for life comes. At this table we find Simon Peter’s words upon our own lips, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68). The ‘necessity’ of encountering Christ thus takes precedence and shapes everything else that presents itself to us as necessary. Knowing from where our nourishment is truly found is central to Metz’s critique of modernity as it frees us to live open to others, rather than lives of aggressive domination. This openness to others means the “Eucharistic ‘bread of life’ strengthens us in our receptivity toward suffering and those who suffer”<sup>676</sup>. We thus turn to consider the Eucharist as an important element in forming disciples capable of acting in solidarity that is nourished by charity with those who suffer.

Before proceeding further a comment is due upon the implications of this move for our understanding of scripture. The church best understands its nature, role, and purpose as revealed by scripture. The better its understanding of scripture the more faithful and truthful its worship, preaching, common life, and mission in and to the world will be. However, hyper-individualisation, a multiplication of hermeneutic lens and the cacophony of interpreters of scripture work against scripture forming individuals in Christian discipleship, and a

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<sup>675</sup> Metz, *EC.*, pp. 34 – 47.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

community of believers as a church with a common worship, life and witness. The danger here is the loss of the 'common word', as rather than regulating our life together, everyone understands scripture on their own terms and does what is right "in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6). The diversity of Christian orthodoxy is in these conditions of hyper-individuality and post-modern fragmentation transformed into an atomisation of belief and practice that is often internally and externally incoherent. Our interest in 'practices,' and specifically the practice of Eucharist is therefore not to devalue scripture. Rather, our 'high' view of scripture leads us to believe such practices help our common reading, understanding and 'performance' of the Word.

Furthermore, just as what Jesus has taught his disciples is inseparable from who and what he is and has done, so as followers of Christ our reception of his teaching, our belief, is inseparable from what we do and vice versa. Jesus' command to eat his body and drink his blood is a challenge to any account of Christianity that separates what we believe from what we do. This command challenges any account of Christianity that separates the Word from our following of and obedience to that Word. Just as what Jesus taught is inseparable from his work, so the truth of the Gospel is not known apart from those activities we recognise as being actions of disciples of Christ and in particular by baptism and Eucharist. Specifically, without reducing this to a list, the gospel is a truth that cannot be known apart from its concrete representation in a body of people constituted by the acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ, the proclamation of and obedience to the Word, prayer, baptism and

Eucharist, which is inseparable from what it means to love God and love our neighbour. Our focus here is on the Eucharistic aspect of knowing and living in this truth.

Our methodological position is therefore not one of scripture and tradition as diametrically opposed. Tradition expressed as practices, which find their basis and form in scripture, draws us corporately as we participate in such practices into the narrative of scripture and thus enriches our understanding of scripture.

Having dealt with these issues we return to consider the practice of Eucharist. The Eucharist is important to moral identity for while Christ and the Spirit are present in and to the life of a believer in everyday life, we recognise that in the Eucharist Christ is present to us in a ‘peculiar’ way. As we partake of the Eucharist we are brought into the presence of Christ by His Spirit and as we cannot be detached from our action(s) they accompany us into this holy space. We must therefore ask, “[D]oes this or that instance of human conduct ‘belong’ here – in the presence of Christ, *Christus praesens, totus Christus, Christus pro nobis?*”<sup>677</sup>. Thus, in the light of the Eucharist questions about our moral and political life are appraised.

There are, of course, different theologies of the Eucharist and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore or try to harmonise these. We shall therefore

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<sup>677</sup> Wannenwetsch, *The Whole Christ and the Whole Human Being*, in Shults, F. LeRon, and Waters, Brent (eds.), *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

approach the issue of the Eucharist from the standpoint of one tradition: the Baptist and baptistic church tradition. Nevertheless, we shall also draw on helpful theological contributions from outwith this tradition and demonstrate the importance of Metz's category of dangerous memory and its correspondence with the memorial emphasis in the Baptist tradition.

The primary way in which Baptists have understood the Lord's Supper is as a memorial meal. To gather around the Lord's Table is principally to participate in "a vivid act of remembrance through which we memorialize Christ's sacrifice"<sup>678</sup>. This subjective understanding of the ordinance rightly emphasises its anamnestic character<sup>679</sup>. Political theology, however, challenges us to name the subjects of this remembering and objectify this vivid remembrance in concretized acts of charity. We must ask, what is it that is remembered, who is remembered, and for whom are we remembering? Yet, what is not explicitly emphasised in this account of Eucharist is Christ's presence at the table. As we have noted, if the Eucharist is to form us as disciples it does so primarily because Christ is present and we must ask if our actions belong in His presence. Our baptistic starting point of 'remembrance' must therefore be open to learn to ask the question our Lutheran brethren articulate, 'How is

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<sup>678</sup> Grenz, S., *Theology for the Community of God*, Carlisle : Paternoster Press, 1994, p. 695.

<sup>679</sup> By designating the Lord's Supper as an ordinance I am not excluding its sacramental significance but prioritizing its significance as an ordinance and therefore the motif of obedience. However, given a sacramentum was "the oath of fidelity and obedience to one's commander sworn by a Roman soldier upon enlistment in the army", a sacramental view can also include the political proclamation of Christ's lordship and our obedience to that rule. Nevertheless, the understanding of grace common to sacramentalism remains problematic to baptistic theology. A sacramental view of the Lord's Supper would need to give an account of grace not as a reality distinct from God, but as God's presence with us, Immanuel.

Christ present to or for us at this table'? However, our starting point is with Metz's concept of 'dangerous memory,' as this resonates with the baptistic emphasis on memorial and from this we shall enter the debate over anamnesis and explore its political significance.

Among the many contributions Metz has made to contemporary theology his category of memory is significant. While this is a consistent category through his three decades of writing, he most clearly articulates its importance in an essay from 1971 titled "*The Future in the Memory of Suffering*"<sup>680</sup>. Influenced by Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis in their *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, Metz questions the direction our scientific, technological and economically dominated society is heading. Politics is dying as life is more and more driven by economics and controlled by a growing scientification and technolisation, a thesis to which Arendt would also assent. We are driven forward, ever faster into a false enlightenment characterised by a Hegelian necessity and conception of progress<sup>681</sup>. Our late-modern societies continue to propagate the belief our anxieties can be overcome by technological and scientific progress. This ignores the "ambiguity of the human self" and also reduces that self to a mere machine, another piece of technology<sup>682</sup>. Hence, to quote Metz: "there is no lack today of

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<sup>680</sup> Metz, *FF*, pp. 3 – 16.

<sup>681</sup> Hegel's Philosophy of History may be summarised as believing in three necessary divisions, epochs, or stages in history. Each new stage is a necessary prerequisite to the next more developed stage. This development is framed in terms of progress, to the growing realisation and actualisation of the Absolute within history.

<sup>682</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold, *Faith and History*, London : Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1949, p. 14.

voices to follow up Nietzsche's proclamation of the 'death of God' with that of the 'death of man'." <sup>683</sup>

From this analysis, politics as the ability to determine the ends society seeks and to actualize the means to these ends needs revitalized. For this to happen persons as subjects require to be reborn. For Metz this cannot be achieved unless political consciousness and the consciousness of the human subject are shaped decisively by *ex memoria passionis*, and specifically by the *memoria passionis* of Christ. This connection of memory to suffering is important for it prohibits a rose tinted nostalgia developing, a "false consciousness of our past and an opiate for our present" <sup>684</sup>. As such our *memoria passionis* of Christ is a *dangerous memory* for it makes "demands on us" and "shows up the banality of our supposed realism" <sup>685</sup>. Thus, it is a memory of suffering, not just of our Lord, but also all those included in the history of suffering. This knowledge of suffering offers us an alternative epistemology to the predominance and hegemony of modern scientific knowledge that Metz calls anti-knowledge. The church as a cognitive and emotional minority plays an important role as curator of, and witness to, this anti-knowledge; a knowledge that free us from the beguiling promise of technological or scientific solutions to the problems of the world. The church, operating from this epistemology, witnesses to the history of suffering, our hope for resurrection, and imminent return of Christ. Our memory of

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<sup>683</sup> Metz, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7 -8. Banality when used with Metz should be understood in its connection with Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the 'Culture industry' and Arendt's infamous use of the term to denote lack of thought. Metz thus seeks to convey by his use of banal that this is the antithesis of memory.

suffering therefore has a future content; it is not the scientists but those in Christ who know of the world where there is no more sickness and no more war. It is we the church who know of a world in which creation is healed and people are saved. We thus seek the good of this earthly city as we exemplify the characteristics of the heavenly city by practising charity in the here and now. The bias in this exemplification is to the poor, to those whose suffering has been sublated and named as ‘necessity’ or ‘meaningless’ by our idealistic histories.

Metz’s category of dangerous memory leads us – we suggest - to reflect upon the Lord’s supper as the rite in which we the church develop an anti-knowledge that resists the non-politics of our age. We are not alone in making this connection as his thoughts have also been taken up in this regard by liturgical theologians and within the discussion of the meaning of *anamnesis* and *mnemosunon*, no more so than by Bruce Morrill S.J..

Morrill, drawing on David Gregg’s 1970 work<sup>686</sup>, states that ‘*touto poieite*’ normally translated “do this” should be translated as “perform this action”<sup>687</sup>. While we reject this as possible translation from the Greek - ‘*touto poieite*’ can only ever mean ‘do this’ - we nevertheless think that in suggesting that we should understand the instruction to ‘do this in remembrance of me [that is Christ],’ as a performative action Morrill and Gregg capture the spirit of the biblical injunction. To perform an action is qualitatively different from ‘doing’ an action. Doing is mechanical, whereas a performative action sweeps the participant into

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<sup>686</sup> Gregg, David, *Anamnesis in the Eucharist, Grove Liturgical Study 5*, Bramcote : Grove Books, 1976.

<sup>687</sup> Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, Minnesota : LTP, 2000, p. 169.



a narrative that is re-enacted. In narrating the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the memory of Jesus “transforms the thoughts and actions of the participants”<sup>688</sup>. To this thought of Morrill we add that in understanding the remembrance of Jesus at the Eucharist as a performative action the temptation to pedagogically reduce Christ to a moral exemplar is reduced. Objections to reducing Christ to a moral exemplar are clearly laid out for us by Bonhoeffer. In his Christology lectures he, drawing on Luther, prioritizes encountering Christ in the sacraments over taking Christ as an exemplar. The philosophical basis for this is similar to something we encountered in our chapter on Arendt, in that Bonhoeffer argues that the person interprets their work rather than vice versa: “if the person is good, the work is good, even if it does not seem to be so...It is essential to know the person if the work is also to be known”<sup>689</sup>. For Bonhoeffer this was of soteriological importance for while we may be a better person for emulating the work of Christ such imitation does not deal with our sin as we remain “in the power of death”<sup>690</sup>. This is not incidental to the position we seek to articulate given our and Metz’s focus on the need for the conversion. Furthermore, the priority of sacrament over “exemplar” seeks to defend “Christ’s *ongoing activity as a living* sacrament, as opposed to his being reduced to a *historical* role exemplifying moral values”<sup>691</sup>. Christ’s on-going activity correlates with our comments on performative action in that through remembering ‘rightly’ at the Eucharist we are swept into a ‘narrative that is re-enacted’; we are brought into Christ’s presence. In remembering in this manner

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<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>689</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Christology*, p. 38.

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>691</sup> Wannenwetsch, *The Whole Christ and the Whole Human Being*, p. 89.

we encounter Christ and recognise one's-self "as one who could not possibly do this work," and this awareness of our need of Christ frees us to receive the grace and the *charismata* required to participate in his work in our everyday lives<sup>692</sup>.

So far we have emphasised the anamnestic nature of the Eucharist meal. Max Thurian sought to enrich our understanding of the designation of this meal in Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24 and 25 as something to be done anamnastically by examining its synonym *mnemosunon*<sup>693</sup>. Turning to the account of a woman anointing Jesus in Mark 14:9 and Matthew 26:13, he insists *mnemosunon* does not mean "in memory of her" but given its connection to prayer, it is "an acted giving of praise which recalls her before the Lord; it is a memorial of her, and God will remember her"<sup>694</sup>. In treating *mnemosunon* and anamnesis as interchangeable Thurian states that when the Church celebrates the Eucharist it "presents to the Father, 'the death of the Lord until he come'"<sup>695</sup>.

On this view, in remembering Jesus we are bringing Jesus and his work before God the Father, and appealing to God to show His grace and mercy to us because of the remembrance of Jesus. Theologically, kerygmatically and practically there is much to commend this understanding of remembrance at the Lord's Table. In particular it rightly places the remembrance of Jesus in the context of the whole life of Jesus and not just his passion. If observing the Lord's Supper is to have a practical intent – as we believe it should – then remembering

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<sup>692</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Op. cit.*

<sup>693</sup> Thurian, *The Eucharistic Memorial: Part 2, The New Testament*, London : Butterworth Press, 1961, 1963.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20 – 21.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the whole life of Jesus is important otherwise our following of him is truncated. However, we do not think anamnesis and mnemosunon are interchangeable as Thurian suggests.

In comparing mnemosunon and anamnesis Gregg notes the nuanced differences between the words. The former designates “a certain intrinsic continuing, abiding permanency” thus keeping something continually in mind. The latter designates “something that is momentary or discontinuous”<sup>696</sup>. The significance of this is that the Eucharistic memory depicts God’s presence to, and continuing interruptions in, history. The Eucharistic memory as ‘momentary or discontinuous’ is dependant upon Christ’s presence at this ordinance if it is not to regress into ineffectual sentimentalism. That Christ’s presence is essential to the anamnestic nature of the memorial meal legitimates our marriage of Bonhoeffer’s emphasis of Christ’s mystical presence at the Eucharist with our and Metz’s emphasis on memory. The memorial aspect of the meal in our account gives priority to the anamnestic aspect, emphasising Christ’s presence, yet mnemosunon must not become detached from the meal for this facilitates our recalling of God’s goodness and past acts. In this way the memories of both God and people are stirred, “eliciting action on the part of both”<sup>697</sup>. Thus our Eucharistic memorial always has a “vocational implication, a ‘remember-and-do-something-as-a result’”<sup>698</sup>.

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<sup>696</sup> Morrill, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*

To remember-and-do-something-as-a result at the Eucharist meal leads us to consider our table manners. Economist Michael Jacobs suggests that Adam Smith's invisible hand is not the only force at work in market economies, but there is also an invisible elbow. He states: "elbows are sometimes used to push people aside in the desire to get ahead. But more often elbows are not used deliberately at all; they knock things over inadvertently"<sup>699</sup>. What is more, damage done by invisible elbows is rarely directly experienced by those who cause the damage. It is our suggestion that when we gather around the Lord's table those who suffer - the weak, the poor, the oppressed - have become invisible to us. Our comfortable Western lifestyles have led to bad table manners where splayed elbows knock from the table the least of our brothers; behaviour reminiscent of that described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.

We therefore need to be made aware of our elbows and in doing so rediscover our catholicity and allow charity to open our eyes once again to those whom we have failed to see. Our participation at the Lord's Table therefore not only enacts our fellowship with Christ but with each other – with the slum dweller in Manila, the modern day slave in Asia. Political theology seeks to name this other and make his and her face present to ours not just at this table but also in the ordinariness of everyday life.

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<sup>699</sup> Jacobs, *The Green Economy*, London : Pluto Press, 1991, p. 25.

This understanding of the Lord's Table is not new within Baptist theology. The late James McClendon commenting on 1 Corinthians 11 makes the following point that is worth quoting at length.

[T]he point of that meal is solidarity in the kingdom; those who ignore this have missed the first lesson of Christian social ethics, and lost sight of the meaning of the rite. If its meaning has to do with the conduct of Christians at the meal itself, it also has to do with their conduct in the daily fellowship, and in their relation to the wider society as well.<sup>700</sup>

Given what we have already said about solidarity we shall comment on McClendon's use of this term below. However, his basic point about the meal and our conduct at the meal flowing into everyday life is well made. As such we aim to develop this thought into an understanding of "Eucharistic life" within the anamnestic structure of the meal, its eschatological orientation, and Christ's presence *Christus praezens, totus Christus, Christus pro nobis*<sup>701</sup>. The table is therefore the place where we are confronted by Christ's charity and must examine ourselves, repenting of where we have not shown this charity to our neighbour and allowing ourselves to be filled with, and transformed by, this charity as we dine with Christ at His table. Repentance and conversion, themes integral to Metz's theology with his emphasis on the conversion of the bourgeois, are very much to the fore as we prepare for ("Examine yourselves" 1 Cor. 11:28), and partake in the Eucharistic meal.

Notwithstanding our concerns over the concept of solidarity there are two complementary routes to insisting with McClendon that the meal *is* a social ethic and that in remembering the body of Christ we do not just remember Jesus but

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<sup>700</sup> McClendon, *Op. cit.*, p. 217

<sup>701</sup> Wannenwetsch, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

those who constitute his body here on earth in these in-between-times. The public reading of Chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians – which includes Paul’s instructions on conduct at the Lord’s Supper – almost takes on the character of a formal liturgy in many Baptist congregations<sup>702</sup>. In keeping with our comments that scripture and ‘practices’ inform each other, and that practices do not diminish the place or importance of scripture, this public reading is very important. It is our contention that this passage should be understood within its wider context of Chapters 10 – 12.

Broadly speaking we may summarise 10 – 12 as instructions regarding the conduct of the household of faith and the gathered church. There is no sacred / secular divide operative here, but an holistic approach to life and worship is articulated. Of particular interest to us are Paul’s comments about the bread and the body in 10:17: “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread”. Its proximity to verses 23 – 24 of chapter 11, and Paul’s comments in verse 16, “Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?” legitimate, in our opinion, the understanding that the breaking of the communion bread represents not just the actual body of Christ but also those who are *of* Christ, his spiritual body as those who constitute his body here on earth in these in-between-times. The breaking of bread represents Christ’s body ‘broken for you’, but given the link we have made between the bread and Christ’s spiritual body this performative action seeks to “re-member” this awareness of its suffering members and its brokenness. Breaking bread should entail an awareness, practical in its intent, of the reality of suffering in our

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<sup>702</sup> Baptist services of worship are noted for their lack of formal liturgy.

midst and in the world, a point we consider to be consistent with Paul's theology of the Church as the body of Christ<sup>703</sup>. By including the world in this remembrance of suffering we reject any interpretation of McClendon's use of solidarity that narrowly restricts this to 'those who are like us'. In remembering Christ in his suffering we should not narrowly restrict this to those who are visible to us as members of the church, but must include those who are still "far off" (Acts 2:39). This inclusion is charity at work and must be concretised in acts of neighbour-love.

Influential sociologist Zygmunt Bauman asserts that the identity of modern persons is fluid, consequentially there is a constant search for identity. Having been liberated from constraints of religious myths we have found ourselves on our own; all sense of the collective has been lost rendering us as "disembedded individuals" who bump into each other but cannot "congeal"<sup>704</sup>. This has been characterised as freedom, the power to choose how we satisfy our desires and the ability to construct our own identity. We thus "shop around the supermarket of identities" until we find one that fits our need, discarding this when it no longer meets our requirements: we are *autopoietic* selves. The metaphor of the supermarket suggesting the ability "to make and unmake identities at will" is grounded in consumer choice<sup>705</sup>. Freedom understood on these terms has immense implications for politics and ethics as this conception shifts our discourse from asking what is a 'just society' to questions over 'human

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<sup>703</sup> C.f. Harvey, *Can these Bones Live?*, Grand Rapids : Brazos Press, 2008, pp. 14 - 24. Morrill, *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>704</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge : Polity Press, 2000, pp. 28 – 35.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

rights'<sup>706</sup>. The *autopoietic* self is however something of a phantom, an individual *de jure* rather than an individual *de facto*. What is more, the gap between the condition of individuals *de jure* and individuals *de facto* "is wide and growing" to such an extent that a chasm, which cannot be "bridged by individual effort alone," separates the two. Bauman notes that "bridging the gap is a matter of Politics"<sup>707</sup>.

Where these 'disembodied individuals' do connect with others is in what he terms peg communities, "momentary gathering[s] around a nail on which many solitary individuals hang their solitary fears"<sup>708</sup>. What emerges from these fragile communities is not a public sphere where as citizens we can discern the public good, but "the preoccupation of individuals *qua* individuals"<sup>709</sup>. The public square is thus invaded and "colonized by the private" and a politics which seeks the good of society becomes incomprehensible given the reduction of public issues to private sentiments, a mere solidarity of collected self interest<sup>710</sup>. His analysis and narrative may differ from Arendt, but there is agreement between them on the transformation of the public realm by private concerns. Bauman, therefore, widens Arendt's anxieties that primarily arise from economic concerns and avers that the abrogation of society and true politics is the result of the modern fluid self and its *autopoietic* identity.

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<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*



We have already in our discussion of the relationship of the *polis* to the *oikos* in chapter seven articulated a solution for this *autopoietic* self that abrogates society and politics, but at that juncture did not bring the argument down to the level of individual identity. The solution for the going public of the private sphere and its dominance of the political realm is not the reassertion of the dominance of the *polis* over the *oikos* but the reconciliation of the two. It is in the political worship of the church, and in particular the ordinance of the Eucharist, that the reconciliation of the different forms of life takes place. The Church in her practice of political worship therefore “constitutes a political community which is hard to domesticate”<sup>711</sup>. The impulse of society to claim all before it, domesticate it, and transform our identity from “person to role” is thus resisted in the political worship of the Church, our transformation in baptism and encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. Given the relationship of individual, *oikos* and *polis* are all in view in 1 Corinthians 10 – 12, the Lord’s Table becomes the centre-place not just of the reconciliation of man to God, but the reconciliation of all things including the competing spheres of life.

This returns us to the issue of solidarity and its appropriateness as a theological category. Against the background where “individualisation seems to be the corrosion and slow disintegration of citizenship” the vocabularies of individualism and solidarity are incommensurable<sup>712</sup>. Thus any unified form of life and moral discourse is precluded and solidarity, according to Richard Rorty, becomes little more than the self-determination to behave socially. The self

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<sup>711</sup> Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, p. 216.

<sup>712</sup> Bauman, *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

chooses which moral language, or identity, to use in each context or role in order to exist in solidarity. This solidarity, based on self-determination, takes its bearing from those close to us, excluding the needs of the other as other. Neighbourliness, which is “determined by the need of the other person”, is made impossible because of this exclusion of the other as the other<sup>713</sup>. Solidarity cannot surmount the hyper-individualism and fragmented identities of the *autopoietic* self. The cohesiveness and appropriate disinterestedness in the self is impossible to achieve given the fluid identity and self-absorption of the Western self. Solidarity is therefore no basis for a cohesive society in which the needs of the other form part of the common good.

In contrast to the contemporary *autopoietic* self Wannenwetsch proposes a homologous ethical identity<sup>714</sup>. Identity, he argues, is homologous rather than homogeneous for we need to acknowledge the “unity of the biographical and ethical interpretation of the Christian ‘story’” while at the same time recognising the “variety of charismata”<sup>715</sup>. In other words the term homologous recognises unity is brought about by grammar that allows a plurality of vocabularies. As such the Holy Spirit, like on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, enters and transforms language. There is then a sense in which ethical living is itself a charismata of the Spirit, that “only when human action is dependent upon the Spirit ...can human action be authentically ethical”<sup>716</sup>. Such a penetration of our

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<sup>713</sup> Wannenwetsch, *Op. cit.*, p. 222.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>716</sup> Colwell, John E., *Living the Christian Story: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics*, Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 2001, p. 152.

moral language is brought to focus in the Eucharist, given its connection with encountering the presence of Christ. The pervasion of our moral vocabulary is reinforced in our regular encounter with Christ at His memorial table, renewing our individual and corporate identity as those formed by the Word of God and capable of embracing the world with His charity.

Our participation at the Lord's Table is therefore intrinsic to transforming solidarity to neighbourliness through our encounter with Christ and our identification with him and his body. To understand how this is so it is worth quoting Wannenwetsch at length:

According to the rules of Jesus' narrative art, ethical identity is not 'sustained' at all. Rather, it comes into being through identification, in the course of which one person becomes the other's neighbour ...We may be people who act more or less in solidarity with others, but as 'neighbours' we are always still becoming<sup>717</sup>.

There are two important points to draw from this quote. Firstly, given neighbourliness is not ontologically fixed but entropically flows away from charity towards solidarity we need regular acts of worship that reform and sustain our identity as neighbour. As noted, participation in the Eucharist is of particular import here given it is a narrative remembering of the life of Jesus.

Our regular participation in the Eucharist recapitulates the commitments made in word and deed in our baptism. In celebrating Christ's death we remember this:

That one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died

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<sup>717</sup> Wannenwetsch, *Op. cit.*, p. 232.

and rose again on their behalf. ...Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 17).

We recall that in our identification in baptism with Christ's death and resurrection our eschatological identity comes into being, transforming any socially, politically, or historically inherited identity. It is not that these other identities are obliterated or annihilated, but they are redeemed and submit to the process of sanctification so that as we mature in Christ those elements of identity that are shaped by our social constructs are now shaped by Christ's lordship and his Spirit that seeks to alert us to and empower us to live in light of the world to come. This is Paul's point in Galatians 3:27 -28. As this identification with Christ includes identification with sinners we can say that in baptism we die to solidarity and are raised to neighbourliness. Identification with the other precludes discipleship that has neighbour-love as a key expression of following Christ from taking an insular privatistic form, thus "neighbourliness must be seen as a political category" and not merely as a role one plays<sup>718</sup>. This side of the eschaton we are always still becoming a neighbour, yet this must not be confused with role identity that like the persona in a Greek tragedy play changes given our context and role. Our identity as a neighbour that is always a-becoming is our "'skin' as a Christian citizen"<sup>719</sup>. It is this transformation of 'skin' (identity) rather than persona which is pre-eminently experienced in the act of baptism for "all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

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<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.* p. 232.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*

Our identification with sinners in baptism takes a specific focus at the Eucharist. In remembering Christ's suffering we also identify with and remember those who suffer now. Yet we must remember rightly. Christ's suffering and death was not an act of solidarity with the human plight. Our suffering is destroyed in Christ not because it is taken into the inner-life of the Trinity, nor because God suffers in solidarity with us. Our suffering is destroyed in Christ for in taking our punishment while being without sin, but becoming sin on our behalf, Christ destroys both "the sin and the punishment" and with this destroys suffering's power over us<sup>720</sup>. Christ's suffering is therefore the supreme act of charity, the supreme act of neighbourliness, as it attends to not just the manifestations of suffering but its cause. At the Eucharist we re-remember this and are sustained in our becoming neighbours who remember-and-act by our fresh encounter with Christ. The re-membling of his body aspect of this turns our gaze away from our self that we may see the injured traveller metaphorically – or perhaps literally – lying dying in the road. Given this is an active remembering, a remember and do something, as we go from the Table so we take with us the 'oil and wine' to pour into the lives of others.

We return now to the clause, 'until He comes' (1 Cor. 11:26), and the eschatological expectation aroused by the Eucharist meal. This phrase has been linked with the Aramaic saying Maranatha. Like much else there is disagreement over the meaning of Maranatha. It can mean, "our Lord, come" and is therefore a prayer that the parousia would take place at that moment. It

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<sup>720</sup> Augustine quoted in Teske, *Ibid.*, p. 351.

may also mean “our Lord has come and is here”. Some commentators prefer the latter, as for them it signifies the presence of Christ at the memorial meal. Both Barrett and Wainright however direct us to Revelation 22:20 and the cry of *erkou Kyrie Iesou* - come Lord Jesus - a statement given, its proclamation that Jesus is lord in distinction from the Caesars of this world, is intrinsically a political claim. Marana tha - our Lord come – is also an imperative, thus the primary understanding of this clause in 1 Corinthians should be as a cry for the Eschaton. Following Cullmann (1957), Wainright and Morrill think that both meanings can co-exist at the meal, whereby the Lord’s presence is sought at the meal, and his return in final apocalyptic glory is requested.

Political theology seeks to highlight this eschatological expectation, an expectation that has by and large been lost in our contemporary practice. With the passing away of the first generation of Christians who expected Christ’s return before their death, apocalyptic expectation became problematic and eschatology was stripped of its apocalyptic intent. The practice of the Eucharist also changed as responsibility for the meal passed from the people to the Priest, damaging the performative aspect of the rite, as the people became passive receivers. Focus moreover shifted from communion to offertory. In Morrill’s description of Roman Catholic practice a strong resemblance with baptistic practice can be seen when he states the Eucharist became “strictly linked to the memory of Calvary”, thus the Mass became “a representation of the sacrifice of the cross for the forgiveness of sins in the present moment”<sup>721</sup>. Fr Tissa

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<sup>721</sup> Morrill, *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

Balasuriya also notes that in guarding against Arianism Jesus' divinity was emphasised almost to the exclusion of his humanity. This combination of events deafened ears to hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 as connected to our prayer "until he come" as the meal and its apocalyptic content became spiritualised and subjectivised. That is we have failed to discern the body aright and thus in seeking the presence of the Lord at our table we have forgotten "the least of the brethren" (Matt. 25: 40 & 45)<sup>722</sup>. The mercy we have been shown at the table must be extended to whoever "the least of these" are.

Again drawing on the thoughts of Metz, the eschatological orientation of the meal is significant in at least three respects<sup>723</sup>. Firstly, memory as 'anticipatory memory' forms the centre of the praxis of our faith. It is a memory not just of what has passed, but of what is to come to pass<sup>724</sup>. As noted before, it is we the church who know the end to which we and our world are ordered and the relation of temporal ends to ultimate ends. We thus know the limits of earthly politics, we know that technology and science – including medical science – will not one day fix everything.

Secondly, in remembering the Eschaton we shatter the illusion of what Metz calls evolutionary time – that is the belief that nothing comes to an end

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<sup>722</sup> "The discernment of the body is multivalent. It entails an awareness and imitation of the person and mission of the Christ ...as well as an awareness of Christ's presence in each member of his body, the church, especially the poor and lowly", Morrill, *Op. cit.*, p203.

<sup>723</sup> This is not meant to be exhaustive as other implications of eschatological orientation with apocalyptic intent can and should be drawn.

<sup>724</sup> Albeit this eschatological knowledge cannot be too closely limned.

anymore, but goes on and on forever. Time is bounded by the Lord of time and time as we know it will one day end. The immanent expectation of Christ's return does not produce apathy, a resignation that there is no point in our doing anything as it is incomplete compared to His perfection. Rather, we seek to make straight His path, to feed, clothe, visit and care for the least of these, knowing it shall be a great and terrible day, that Salvation also includes judgement.

Lastly, to live a life marked by conforming to Christ, a life marked by neighbour love, is costly, for to live a life of neighbourly love is to live a life in which many economic and cultural norms of society are challenged. It is to become aware that others have not because we have too much. It is to become aware of our elbows that exclude and damage. There are practical economic and social implications arising from the Lord's Table. To share the Eucharistic bread is to symbolise an economic sharing we commit ourselves to away from the table. The Jerusalem church that "met in their houses for the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:46) extended this table fellowship, in which food was gladly and generously shared, into their everyday lives in which "no one claimed for his own use anything that he had" (Acts 4:32). The extension from Eucharistic sharing to the common purse challenges our conceptions of ownership and of what is private. The common purse should not be confused with political and economic ideologies such as socialism or economic democracy. The point of the common purse was not fairness or economic redistribution; such concepts merely reinforce the ownership paradigm of this is yours and that is mine. No, the point that emerges from the connection of the Eucharist and common purse is that



resources were held in common and not as the exclusive possession of one party to use or share as they saw fit. What this might look like practically in our modern society is beyond the scope of this present thesis.

For his part Metz suggests a revitalisation of the Evangelical Counsel of poverty for this encompasses the will not to possess and not to dominate<sup>725</sup>. It stands as a subversive practice within a society dominated by the tantalisation of need and exchange. The everyday items of bread and wine – items we normally touch and handle as products within a system of need and economic exchange – are transformed as we give and receive these as God’s gracious gift to each one of us. What is more, this gracious gift is equally distributed for it is one we neither deserve nor can we buy. Freed from the “anonymous tyranny of possession”, in this moment of *charity*, we remember that just as the bread and wine are gifts, so are we<sup>726</sup>. We are not data in economic statistics or units of production, but in standing before God we become subjects: subjects of his love and grace, subjects of his mercy and judgment. It is at the Lord’s Table that we know what it is to be human and can celebrate our humanness. If this is to extend beyond the Table into everyday life then we require an economics as if people mattered - the economic must be made to serve people and not people to serve the economic<sup>727</sup>. A politics attentive to and aware of the Lordship of Christ is required to disarm the hegemonic power of the economic realm and re-establish a true politics. This cannot happen if we ourselves are not transformed

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<sup>725</sup> Metz, *FC*.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>727</sup> Here we alluding to the sub-title of E.F.Schumacher’s book on economics, *Small is Beautiful : a study of economics as if people mattered*, 1973, 1993.

by our obedience in baptism and remembering at the Lord's table so we are made aware of, and attentive to, and submit to the Lordship of Christ.

We have not in our account of Eucharist tried to articulate all that can be said on this matter as ours is not an attempt at a comprehensive theology of the ordinance. Rather our political emphasis should be understood as a corrective to the predominance of narrow theologies of the Eucharist that over emphasise an inwardly spiritual account. An obvious element not featured here is that of forgiveness. However, we have already spent quite some time discussing the topic of forgiveness. Nevertheless, considering forgiveness under the heading of baptism and the Eucharist would enrich our understanding of forgiveness in the political sphere. This is not a task that shall be undertaken in this thesis but remains to be taken up by others.

## **Chapter 9.**

### **Beyond Politics? Conclusions.**

We have in this thesis examined the propriety of suffering as a category in contemporary political thought. In doing so we turned to two representatives of the response to the failure of politics, modernity and religion in Europe: J.B. Metz and Hannah Arendt. These two responses, one advocating suffering as an important category for political thought we have characterised as advocating a politics based on belief, the other warning of the calamitous effect on the political realm as a politics based on un-belief. We are in agreement with Metz that a positive vision for political life, which can take a practical form, requires belief in God's redemptive work in Christ. It is only from such belief that we can appropriately include suffering as a political concern and frame an appropriate response to suffering as it confronts us. Our acceptance of Metz has not, however, been uncritical. Just as our acceptance of Metz's political thought is not uncritical so our rejection of Arendt's civic humanism and the political philosophy that gives this structure is not wholesale.

There is a danger that Metz's emphasis on suffering could be a hegemonic category that lords over all other issues political theology must speak to and about. If suffering assumes such a position in political theology then clearly it is damaging, and Metz verges on articulating such a political theology. This is particularly the case if we believe that God has provided no remedy for suffering and that to suffer is to experience abandonment by God. Suffering in

this guise becomes the sole focus of our attention and cultivates a self understanding where our identity is seen as that of victim, an identity category we critiqued in chapter four. Furthermore as the prime focus of our attention it is in danger of becoming a idol and thus a rival and distortion of our worship in spirit and truth of God. In this mode suffering is linked to the form of necessity articulated by Arendt, and her warnings about this form of suffering must be taken seriously.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding these concerns, attentiveness to suffering ought to be included as a political category. The positive and practical vision for political life arising from a politics of belief provides resources for the inclusion of suffering as a political concern in a manner that is not damaging to political life. Key to this is our understanding of Christ's sufferings and his cry of dereliction from the cross. To hear Christ's cry is to hear the cry of those who suffer in silence; it is the articulation of the cry of the weak and vanquished who have been ignored or concealed from view, or consigned to the troubles of the 'private realm'. Christ's cry discloses to us reality as it really is and not just as it might seem to be. This disclosure includes the reality of suffering and feelings of powerlessness and abandonment that accompany it. However, perhaps more significantly, Christ's cry makes known the only true source of consolation for suffering. His cry, which gives voice to the voiceless, is not merely a cry of forsakenness but a statement regarding the source of our hope and the provider of our consolation. Thus, Christ's cry simultaneously reveals all other proclamations of consolation as either related and directed to the consolation we

receive from God, or as myths to be rejected. Important as our political vision and response is there is recognition that politics has limited ends which leads to acknowledging there is a response, which is beyond politics. We have argued for a recovery of Christian charity as an appropriate political response to suffering. Yet, Metz time and again brings us back to prayer, to a cry, as our most basic yet most profound response to suffering. Perhaps in her own way Arendt arrives at a similar conclusion in her last book *The Life of the Mind*, and points us to beyond politics?

Our response to suffering with Christian charity and prayer does not indicate acquiescence towards suffering. A politics of belief is a politic informed by an eschatological outlook. We therefore recognise suffering experienced in this present age has its end in the New Creation that is already active in history while we await its consummation. Like Christ, the first fruit of the New Creation, we follow him in obedience in which there is a movement from suffering to death through to vindication. The movement from suffering to vindication does not mean that suffering is to simply be accepted and our lot is to patiently wait for the world to come. No, our relationship to suffering includes patience but rejects apathy. Suffering is therefore to be expected and borne, yet when we see our neighbour suffering, love active in charity compels us to act. This acting will often be on the personal and seemingly insignificant level given the ubiquity of suffering. To despise this would, however, be to look upon this with the eyes of the earthly city and fail to understand that God has mysteriously chosen to use what is seemingly weak and foolish to outwork his purposes in this world. This

acting will also be on the political level whereby we seek by co-operating with the work of the Spirit to bring transformation to or destroy the structures of sin that entrap people in lives of suffering, in lives robbed of dignity and humanity.

If Metz causes us to focus on Christ's cry from the cross then Arendt alerts us to the theme of one of Jesus's other words from the cross: forgiveness. If suffering is to be included as a political category then a robust understanding of forgiveness is important. We call for a robust understanding of forgiveness as the account given by Arendt is 'thin,' and operates merely on the level of attitudinal adjustment. This 'thin' forgiveness is better than none, and should not be looked upon with contempt for even at this level it performs the important job dealing with issues that would otherwise alienate or set at odds those in the political sphere. It thus helps establish and maintain a degree of peaceableness, and acts as a check to the destructive forces of violence – be they symbolic, structural, institutional, or military – that lurk at the door of politics. However, if forgiveness in the political sphere is to bring actual reconciliation to fractured and broken relationship, be they between states, people groups in the one nation, or members of the political classes, it must include what we called the judicial and moral strands. Forgiveness, if it is to be robust, must name and acknowledge the claims of justice, the claims of a wronged person or persons, and in doing so brings out into the open the failure to do what was right. Forgiveness, in its moral strand, is as we have stated a special kind of remembrance and in this way connects with what we have said about memory as an important category in Metz and our proposal for remembrance in the Eucharist. By naming and

remembering that which is wrong justice is not abrogated nor suspended. The purpose of this naming and remembering is not that penal or retributive justice may be sought but so that this wrong enters into the collective and communal memory lest we forget and repeat the errors of the past. By releasing the offending party in forgiveness from the rightful consequences of the wrong they have committed we enter upon the path of rebuilding and restoring relations. We say that we enter upon a path for the language and grammar of journey is appropriate to describe the processes of moving from being wronged to being in right relations. Furthermore, this journey does not exclude some form of reparative justice, not as a condition of forgiveness, but as a consequence. This central theological category is absent from post-Auschwitz political theology, an absence which reinforces its category of victim and consigns it to neglecting the powerful healing force that forgiveness brings.

Forgiveness and repentance are the mechanisms which free us from the fear of unintended harmful consequences of our actions, attend to justice, and remind and repair the moral framework in which we act and relate to each other which *is* – conceptually at least – a sub category of charity. The same cannot be said for solidarity that has become detached from its foundation in charity. There is an intrinsic physicality to neighbour love that is not inherently true for solidarity. Metz sets forth a solidarity, working in concert with memory and narrative which he describes as having a “dual structure,” in other words “mystical-universal” solidarity and “political-particular” solidarity are not at

odds one with the other<sup>728</sup>. This dual structure is “constantly bringing to the top of the agenda the questions: Solidarity with whom? Solidarity in what form?”<sup>729</sup> As mystical-universal solidarity it transcends the reciprocal solidarity offered by the world that is linked to a system of exchange by answering the question ‘with whom?’ by asserting that included in this are the vanquished and “the dead”<sup>730</sup>. The form such solidarity takes is in correcting the narrative we – and by ‘we’ he invariably means the ‘West’ – have told ourselves, and thus being aware that our comfort has in part been built upon conquest and domination of other peoples by those who came before us. For Metz the practical outworking of this re-telling of history to include the vanquished, is to reject the Idealist concept of sublation, but more importantly to make those for whom history has denied subjecthood visible to us. That is we in the West reject our bourgeois-consumer lifestyles and adopt a simpler form of living that is sympathetic to ‘the other’. In doing this we take a stance of ‘political-particular’ solidarity as such acts seek to give preference to and support and encourage those who presently suffer from our over-consumption and exclusive modes of exchange. Yet despite claiming that this is not “abstract” the form such solidarity takes is never clear<sup>731</sup>. Furthermore, given his emphasis on “global solidarity,” solidaristic action not only remains abstract, but relationally remote. As such Metz’s solidarity is characterised by being *for* the other rather than *with* them. While being ‘for’ the other and mindful of how our life affects those geographically remote from our own context is admirable, it ironically remains impersonal. Forgiveness is unimportant in this

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<sup>728</sup> Metz, *GGG*, p. 223.

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 222 - 3.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*



framework for despite the interconnectedness of our 'global society' we are unlikely ever to come face to face with the other.

#### Final Words.

The Incarnation - as understood to include Christ's birth, life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension – is the promise of God's self-sacrificial presence in time, and concurrently the promise and hope of the realisation of His victory over death and thus the vindication and healing of all those who suffer *in* Christ. We therefore actively, yet patiently, await our vindication in Christ, our resurrection to 'imperishability' in the knowledge that on that day "the saying that is written will be fulfilled: Death has been swallowed up in victory ...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54, 57). It is with this promise and hope that we can fulfil Paul's instruction: "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15: 58). Immanuel (God with us), present to us and His creation by His spirit, present to us in the church and the communion of the saints, at work among us in his kingdom that awaits its consummation at the end of this age, is the Christian response to the problem of evil, the 'solution' to the 'problem' of suffering. This is not to theologically or philosophically circumvent the problem of suffering or propose a justification for evil, for in looking to Christ our saviour we see the scars of his own passion on our behalf, and are thus constantly reminded of the suffering in our world, a suffering that is not faceless, but that bears the name of our neighbour for whom we should love and care.

We are not called to be Job's "comforters" who act only in words and presume to know why suffering and evil occur. Like Metz, we should reject any theodicy that claims to explain why suffering occurs and justify God in the face of this suffering. Authentic theodicy echoes the biblical cries for vindication and comfort, rather than solve the problem of evil, while remaining resolute in the face of suffering in the cry for God to come. Victorian preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon famously compared the Word of God to a lion, stating that a lion does not need defending but "[A]ll you have to do is let the lion loose and the lion will defend itself"<sup>732</sup>. Likewise in the face of immense and immeasurable suffering in our world, we cannot and should not seek to defend God but obediently obey him in love of God and our neighbour. In doing this we co-operate and participate in the work of the Spirit, we make visible in a small measure God's hidden work of transformation, vindication, and healing, and in this sense we see God loosed in our world to act. Ultimately our response to suffering when it comes upon us is one of hopeful prayer, of asking God to come in his fullness. It is to be able, even in the most arduous and pain filled situation, to hope in God in the knowledge that his is the only consolation that can truly satisfy. Meanwhile, in obediently following Jesus we, empowered by his spirit, remain faithful to him and in the hope of our vindication in him and the love of God love our neighbour as we would love ourselves; that on that great and terrible day Christ might say to us:

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<sup>732</sup> Spurgeon, C.H., quoted in Scorgie, Glen G., Strauss, Mark L., Voth, Steven M., (Eds.), *The Challenge of Bible Translation*, Grand Rapids : Zonderzan, 2002, p. 20.

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Matthew 25: 34 – 36.

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